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FLYING VISITS



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The Steps, Guadalupe.

FLYING VISITS

TO THE CITY OF MEXICO AND
THE PACIFIC COAST

BY

L. EATON SMITH

ILLUSTRATED WITH EIGHT PHOTOGRAVURES



LIVERPOOL
HENRY YOUNG & SONS
1903

F1386
S6

GENERAL

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & CO.
At the Ballantyne Press

TO
M. R. A. B.
AND
W. B.

156181

THE PACIFIC COAST

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MEXICO



M E X I C O

CHAPTER I

NEW ORLEANS

ON the 5th of March 1900 I left New York for a hurried trip to the City of Mexico. The general idea was for me to go to New Orleans and stay for a couple of days, that some American relations should follow and pick me up there, and that we should go on together to the City of Mexico, which is 3200 miles, or five days' journey, distant from New York. After a week in the City of Mexico I was to return *via* New Orleans, staying there again a couple of days while the rest of the party went to California. The trip was necessarily a very hurried one, but a glimpse is better than no sight at all.

The journey from New York to New Orleans by way of Washington, Atlanta, and Montgomery takes about forty hours. This route crosses Virginia, the two Carolinas, and Georgia, in fact lies almost wholly in southern territory, and the

south is a disappointment. Perhaps my ideas of it were too rosy, as they were certainly indefinite, derived principally from stories of *ante bellum* days mingled with reminiscences of "coon songs." I expected a land of sunshine and plenty, where rows of happy darkies hoed endless fields of cotton, and where tobacco plantations spread wide about spacious colonnaded houses—the homes of profuse hospitality and of a more easy, leisured life than the northern States possess. A moment's thought would have dissipated this glamour, but I did not even stop to think that the month was March.

As it was, I found a ramshackle, forlorn land monotonous and poverty stricken. At first the country was swampy with many hollows and rivers full of yellowish water. There was much wood, of rather insignificant pine for the most part, and everywhere yellow-red sand cropped out giving colour to the landscape. Later in the day the line wound in many short curves through a more hilly and better wooded land where there were some fine views, but soon again brought us down to the former monotony.

We passed innumerable wooden shanties, surrounded by the black sticks of last year's corn and the withered bushes of last year's cotton. There were hardly any towns of any pretensions, and signs of progress seemed confined to occa-

sional new red-brick cotton mills, ugly and square, with rows of new wooden cottages as ugly and formal as themselves.

The negroes were greatly in evidence, much out-numbering the white folk we saw. All the stations on the southern railways have one waiting-room for white people and one for coloured. The darkies all wore the most haphazard clothes and drove ramshackle vehicles drawn by two, three, or four mules ; if by four mules then the near wheeler was ridden postillion. Ploughing was everywhere in full swing with little ploughs, each with only one mule, but the soil was so light that even so the pace was tremendous, for a plough.

Atlanta, the one considerable town *en route*, where Eastern time changes to Central, is another disappointment to the ignorant and unreasonable traveller. Expecting he does not quite know what, but at least something old and venerable, he finds a city of sky-scraping buildings like a miniature New York. At least this is the view Atlanta presents to the station.

After the second night in the train I awoke to find mist and pine-woods, a swampy country covered with dead reeds and rushes and many fallen trees—a most dismal outlook. Shortly before reaching New Orleans we ran over very long, low trestle bridges across several great lagoons.

The mist hid the shores, and the overhang of the train the bridge, so that we seemed to be flying over a muddy sea.

We reached the Southern Pacific junction early on Wednesday morning, and Canal Street (New Orleans) about 8.30, some fifty minutes late.

New Orleans has the air of a place that has seen better days, and though interesting is rather depressing, especially when the air is as enervating as I found it. I only stayed a couple of days in New Orleans, both going out and coming back, and each time the weather was mild and warm and damp ; but I think March is rather late to go there.

The hotel, the New St. Charles, is large and new, built in the style of a New York office. It is fitted with every modern convenience, including telephones or indicators in every room, so that almost any conceivable wish can be made known simply by moving an arrow or pressing a button. But it still remains comfortless and rather neglected looking.

The main street of the city—Canal Street—is immensely wide, with room for five lines of electric cars besides a fair breadth of road on either side. Otherwise the streets, at least in the old part of the town, are not broad. Their pavement recalls that of old European cities, big flat stones a foot or more across set diagonally, and their

gutters are very broad and deep. These gutters which, when full, form respectable if unpleasant brooks, are bridged at the street corners by iron plates bearing the name of the street in raised letters, a novel but effective form of sign-post.

The houses particularly in the old quarter have a distinctly foreign air. Nearly always they have one, and often two tiers of verandas. Sometimes the doors and windows are surrounded by heavy plaster mouldings in a reminiscence of old French styles. The shops project over the side-walk a wooden awning supported on pillars, so that the passers-by are under almost continuous shelter. At the western end of the town, on Pritania and the neighbouring streets is the best residential quarter. There, large houses built of wood, but made imposing by the high colonades, set in gardens and screened by great magnolia trees, seem to exhale an air of departed grandeur.

One of the first things I wished to see was the river, the Father of Waters, and here too was disappointment. The Mississippi finds its way to the sea by so many mouths and bayous that the part of it which passes New Orleans is not particularly broad or imposing. The banks are so low—in fact, what banks there are are mostly artificial dykes—that the breadth of the river is lost for want of a background. The water is

muddy yellow. Indeed, all water in New Orleans is of this colour, and the effect is startling to the new-comer who turns on a tap for the first time and lets out a stream of brown-yellow fluid. But the colour is due to sand, which, quickly settling, forms a little sandbank at the bottom of the basin, with clear water above. The drinking water at the hotel came in bottles from springs some distance away.

Among the sights of New Orleans, the cemeteries are supposed to take high rank. Owing to the nature of the soil, and the fact that an excavation of eighteen inches finds water, burying, as commonly understood, is impossible. Therefore all burying must be done above ground, either in little square vaults or in niches, arranged in long rows and three or four tiers, the whole forming a long, square, unsightly mass of masonry. This system gives the cemeteries a very crowded appearance, but otherwise they did not look interesting, so I preferred to regard them through the railings. A little farther out are the Jockey Club building and the race-course. The winter race-meeting begins at the end of November, and goes on for a hundred days.

For the rest, there is a fine public park, with magnificent ilex trees, near which in old days—and not very old days either, for my driver

claimed to remember them—duels used to be fought; some public buildings, of which the square, classical custom-house is the most imposing; a Cathedral of St. Louis, of no great architectural beauty, facing the equestrian statue of General Jackson; and a column monument, like Nelson's in London, to General Lee of the Confederate Army.

But it must not be supposed that New Orleans is uninteresting, although to the casual sojourner it is disappointing. The little side streets, with their French names, recall the other French-settled cities, Montreal and Quebec, where the same saints lend their names to streets. The queer two-wheeled milk carts seem to have an affinity with the calèches of Quebec. French, too, in every detail are the older restaurants, such as the *Café de la Louisiane*. There were no gilding and no mirrors, but a large, bare room, with sanded floor, entered direct from the street. The linen was spotless, the glass and china the typical, plain, thick ware of a French restaurant. Madame fair, but fat, dressed in black satin, and many gold chains and an apron, sat at a high desk and superintended the money matters; while Monsieur, in skull cap and voluminous trousers, appeared at intervals from the back regions, where presumably he directed the cuisine. The food was excellent, thorough

French cooking. The customers, who were of the better classes, seemed habitués of the place, and were on familiar terms with Madame. The waiters were French—one was from Algiers, whither he longed to return, but was unhappily hampered by a wife and family. Another was from Passy, near Paris. Altogether the *café* was like a piece of the Old World transplanted, and it seems incredible that it and the New St. Charles should exist a few hundred yards from one another.

New Orleans, of course, should be visited in the winter, or at Carnival time; and any person who goes there in Lent, or early spring, must take the consequences, of which dulness and dismal rain are the most obvious. But even then when the sun shone the air was delightful, if too soft, and the early flowers made March forgotten, for May seemed already come.

CHAPTER II

EN ROUTE TO MEXICO

AFTER two days in New Orleans I was joined by the other two of the party, and together we started for Mexico on Wednesday morning. Leaving the South Pacific station at the foot of Esplanade Street we were ferried across the river to Algiers, together with the baggage-cars, which had been loaded on the New Orleans side, and a private car which at Algiers was attached to the rear of our train, much to our disgust, as it blocked out our backward view.

At Algiers we found our sleeping-cars, and after a little trouble our places in them. The others had the "drawing-room," a little compartment at the end of the car with two berths and a lavatory. I had a section, that is, an upper and lower berth. This is rather extravagant, as it means paying for two berths and only using one, but has great advantages. In the day-time it gives more room for oneself and one's traps, and at night, as the upper berth is not let down, one has more air and much more

head room than the cramped space of a lower berth affords.

Among the other passengers were two ladies of a theatrical troupe, the rest of the company being in the day coaches. They got off about seven in the evening at a little place called Lake Charles, where it seemed impossible there should be any kind of theatre, even of the most primitive kind, or any audience to fill it. There was, too, an English M.P., who, as a great engineering contractor and a great personage in Mexico, was going down for the opening of the drainage canal and tunnel which his firm had helped to complete for the City of Mexico. Also an interesting Canadian who had served his time in a Castle Line sailing ship and seen the world, grown coffee in Ceylon, something in the Seychelles, cocoa in Trinidad, oranges in California, and now grows india-rubber, cocoa, and vanilla in Mexico.

At first the outlook was desolate, chiefly of yellow rivers and swamps, where cypresses, their trunks swelling at the base, grew straight out of the water. Dotted about among the cypresses were many palmettos, which somehow did not look natural, but rather as though bedded out for some festivities like the palms in Hyde Park in the summer.

As there was no dining-car on our train, it had to stop at intervals for meals. It dined at a place

called Lafayette City at about half-past two. We had to wait longer than usual so as to allow the east-bound "Sunset Limited" to pass us. This is the *train de luxe* from the west coast, and after keeping us waiting about forty minutes it passed covered thick with dust after its journey across the plains. (So far as I remember, the whole of this railway to the City of Mexico is single line.) Meanwhile we were beset by negro boys trying to sell us five-cent camellias, oranges or violets. We did not want any of these luxuries, but persuaded one small boy to stand for his photograph. This he was willing to do for five cents, but when he saw two cameras pointed at him, vigorously explained that he meant five cents a camera. We afterwards created great indignation by taking the whole body of them from the car window for nothing. These boys talked the most extraordinary lingo among themselves, apparently with a good deal of bastard French in it.

Though there was no dining-car, there was a substitute in the fact that our carriage was what is called a "buffet-car"—that is, it had a tiny kitchen at one end, whence a certain sort of meal could be had. The menu, though fairly large, never varies, and you meet it from Montreal to Mexico, and west to San Francisco, wherever the Pullman buffet-cars run. All the things practically are cooked and canned, and

need little but warming. The advantages of the system are that, if the wayside eating-houses are indifferent, you are sure of a certain standard of comfort and cleanliness in the car and of unlimited time. The main disadvantage is the lack of variety; for instance, for our three meals a day for three days, we confined ourselves—as the possible alternatives seemed dubious—to eggs, coffee, bread and butter, some kinds of soup, tinned chicken, and asparagus tips. What may be a more serious drawback is that, since the cars only revictual at certain dépots, if you board one that has been long out, you will find that your menu is more restricted than ever, for all the more palatable dishes are "off." When I came back from the City of Mexico, my car had been out more than its proper time, and all the more desirable eatables were consumed, and those that remained were of doubtful quality. As to drinkables, an Opera Company travelling "dead-head" (*i.e.* free) had drunk all the wine, some one else all the mineral waters, so that there was nothing left but beer for a dusty, thirsty journey. This is anticipating, but it is certain that the monotony of the scenery on the way to Mexico is not lessened by the monotony of the diet.

Soon after Lafayette the desolate country gave place to a splendid farming district. The enor-

mous stretches of grass had all the spaciousness of the northern prairies, but belts of fine timber and villages of substantial wooden houses gave them a more homelike and comfortable air. Two or more mules were needed for each plough, instead of the single one used to the north of New Orleans, and the carts were drawn by four animals abreast, perhaps two mules in the centre and a horse on each flank.

After dark, as the train was beginning to get up speed on leaving a station, I was surprised, on looking out of the end of the car, to see a pair of white-clad legs disappearing on to the roof of the car. I found that a couple of darkies were stealing a ride. It is quite possible to climb on to the roof of the car by the help of the platform railings, and is apparently often done. Although the conductor is supposed to turn off such casual passengers, I found that one is regarded as rather a spoil-sport for saying anything about them. A strong current of such tramps sets toward the Pacific Coast when the weather in the east begins to be too cold. These darkies dropped off a few hours after as we were slowing down to enter a station.

We were at Houston at midnight, and at San Antonio about breakfast-time—this latter quite a large place with some big buildings. Here we were transferred, after a good deal of delay, to a

fresh sleeper that was attached to the end of our train. The car we had been in went through to the west coast, while the new one would go as far west as Spofforth junction, and then be attached to the train for the City of Mexico. As most of the passengers for Mexico were going from San Antonio by the alternative narrow gauge route *via* Laredo, Monterey, and San Luis Potosi, we had the car almost to ourselves.

Soon after leaving San Antonio the great plough lands disappeared, and in their place came a flat country, dotted with prickly pear and mosquito bushes, that came at first as single spies and then in battalions, and bounded by the hills, very distant, and yet in that clear air seeming very near. Then a few broncho ponies with big saddles, some cowboy-like horsemen, a few tall Mexican hats, all showed we were getting near the frontier; while, at one wayside station, a United States mail waggon, drawn by a mule and a white horse, who seemed to feel degraded by his associate, proved we were still in the United States of America. Then another stretch of arable country, but poorer this time, for the ploughs were little one-horse things, and we saw in some places women following them.

About 2.30 we reached Spofforth junction, a low wooden station-house, perched on a high platform, a great water-tower for the engines, and

half-a-dozen wooden houses a few hundred yards away. That was all, set down in the centre of a vast circle of rolling plains, barren of trees, swept by fresh, keen breezes. The single pair of rails ran unswervingly out of the east, and disappeared into the west over a slight rise. Another line came with a curve out of the hillocks to the south from Mexico. Our car was detached, and our train went off, growing smaller and smaller till it sank over the dip in the west. Then we had to wait till a far-off puff of smoke over the hill rose into the funnel, the boiler, and the whole section of a locomotive, and till this grew imperceptibly from a toy to full size, and the east-bound train came in, stopped, and vanished in the eastern perspective. It was more like the ancient, spacious sea, where the ships top the horizon, pass and are eclipsed, than the land and its modern trains.

It was a full hour before we had taken on the western contingent and started southward. We carried now two young Americans who were to act as interpreters at the frontier and customs-house, and very useful we found them. While still on United States soil we passed through the débris of a freight-train wrecked two days before. Two very heavy engines, loaded on trucks forming part of the train, had caused the rails to spread, and the cars had piled up

one upon another. Though masses of wreckage still lay on either side of the line, temporary repairs had been made, and we could with caution pass.

The route we followed enters Mexico about an hour after leaving Spofforth at Eagle Pass. "Pass" must be a grandiloquent expression for the crossing of the Rio Grande del Norte, the frontier line. A long girder bridge spans this river, which was shrunk when we saw it to an insignificant stream meandering down its great bed, and connects Eagle Pass with Ciudad Porfirio Diaz.

The transformation on crossing the river seems almost magical, a change to a fresh world, and yet it seems part of the Old World. The language has changed; all the notices are in Spanish. There are crowds of swarthy, wild-looking men in sandals, tight trousers of blue jean, white shirts, high-crowned, broad-brimmed, silver-laced hats; of dusky women in light dresses, with long-fringed shawls over their heads. Men with trays of strange fruits on their heads parade up and down the train. Some more prosperous person appears in bright yellow breeches, high boots, and broad belt. Little broncho ponies, under enormous saddles, with lariats at the pommel, stand waiting for their riders. In the distance are flat, adobe huts, and some larger build-

ings, surrounded by more or less flourishing gardens.

The custom-house examination which took place here, although a little inquisitive, was not severe, and the aforesaid interpreters did us much service. As dusk fell we were again *en route* for the capital.

About 8.30 in the evening we stopped where no stop was booked. On asking the reason, we were told that it was because a freight-train was halted just in front of us; and, on further inquiries, learned that the block was due to the fact that the dead body of a man was lying on the track. He proved to be a platelayer, who, with other employees of the railway, was hurrying homeward on a hand trolley. Somehow he had lost his balance, and falling backward, struck his head on the rail and died instantly. His body lay on the rails, and, according to Mexican law, could not be moved till some responsible official had come and viewed it. So the trains were blocked for an hour, and this although we were carrying mails. The formalities must have been finally completed, as we were allowed to proceed. This incident gave us a good idea of the strict law now enforced on at least the main lines of communication in Mexico, probably much stricter than in some of the southwestern States across the border.

Early next morning we woke to find the sun just rising over distant blue mountains that shut in on all sides a flat and desert plain. As it was Sunday morning, there were a good many people making their way to the villages, generally riding—sometimes a man in the saddle, and a woman on the pillion, which the little horses did not seem to find too much. At Torreon (8 A.M.), one of the most important stations on the line, was a crowd of people in clean white clothes; for the arrival of the train was evidently an event of some importance, and at every station during the day we found a cluster of loungers—as most of the places were not big enough to produce crowds—and always a few children begging for “centavos.” After Torreon we had to cross a terribly dusty plain, the worst on the whole journey; happily it did not take very long, so it was endurable.

The Mexican Central Railway, on which we now were, keeps as near as possible to the middle of the map and, running due south along the great central plateau of Mexico, rises from 700 feet above sea level at C. P. Diaz (the recognised short title of the frontier town) to 8044 at Zacatecas, drops again to about 5600 feet, rises at Lena to 8132 feet to scale the rim of the basin in which the capital lies, and finally reaches the City of Mexico, which is itself 7350 feet above

the sea. The distance from the frontier to the City of Mexico is 1087 miles, and the time taken for this about 40 hours. This is in striking contrast to the railway from the port of Vera Cruz, which climbs the 7350 feet in 263 miles or about 17 hours.¹

Because of the great altitudes and because of the scarcity of water the country through which the line passes is for the most part a desert, although the latitude is tropical. In the distance were always hills of no great height but of fantastic shapes, generally flat topped and straight sided, rising sheer from the plain. Sometimes they were quite isolated, sometimes in ranges, and they looked like the pictures of South African kopjes. In the farther distance were far higher mountains, which kept appearing now on one side of the train and now on the other as the line meandered

¹ There is an extraordinary divergence in the authorities as to the altitudes of the various cities in Mexico. The City of Mexico itself is, according to Campbell's Guide to Mexico, 7875 feet up; according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica (old edition) 7524, but a note in the same article gives it "exactly" as 7550, correcting Humboldt's figure of 7470. Another Cyclopaedia (The Universal, Appleton) gives 7350, and Janvier's Guide gives the same. The Mexican Central Railway Guide agrees with these, and I have taken its figure in the case of the City of Mexico and of all other places, though it presumably only gives the station level which is not necessarily that of the town. But a railway, both because of its surveys and its daily working, is likely to be fairly accurate in its heights. The altitude of Zacatecas seems to vary from 8044 feet, as given in the Railway Guide, to 8967, a considerable error.

beside the edge of a dry torrent bed, the parched sides of which were cracked and baked, and seamed with deep fissures. The plain was dotted with prickly pear, and Spanish bayonet with its large yellowish flower, besides a sort of low bush with a little yellow blossom. As we went farther south the prickly pear grew larger and the Spanish bayonet became a respectable-sized tree ; yuccas and aloes, frequently in blossom, were more frequent, and various kinds of cactus, of which the most noticeable was that one with tall, straight, spine-covered cylinders like organ-pipes. There was in fact plenty of vegetation of a kind, but it was a low-growing, inhospitable, and repellent kind.

A little before Calera, where the train dined at 4.30, the country showed signs of cultivation. There was a little water to be seen at intervals, actually a lake with ducks on it and a few poplar trees. Sheep and cattle appeared, sometimes feeding, sometimes being driven under a canopy of dust. At each station were a few adobe huts and shanties, grey at first and then red as the colour of the soil changed. About each hut was a rough fence, and all round numbers of donkeys and children. Most of the places seemed creations of the railway and only inhabited by its employees. At the slightly more important stations were great high-sided carts drawn by ten donkeys

(two at the pole and the others four and four) or light driving-carts with white tilts and only five donkeys.

The appearance of cultivation did not last long, and the line began to mount rapidly. Till then, although we had been climbing all the time, the ascent had been imperceptible. Now the gradient was very steep, and we swung round astonishing curves among the hills. So far as I remember there were no tunnels at all between Washington and the City of Mexico, a distance of about 3000 miles. If there were they were very short, or we passed them in the night. High above us as we curved and twisted we saw a white-domed church, built in a dip of the highest ridge. This dominates Zacatecas, where our climb ended. The town looks very like pictures of towns in the Holy Land. It is built at the bottom of a valley—almost a gorge—and on the bare, steep sides of the converging hills. The houses, low, flat-topped, and with the smallest of windows, rise tier over tier like great flights of steps. There is a large church in the centre, but as we viewed the town in the failing light the chief building was the white-domed church on the hill, looking like a mosque and completing the Eastern picture. On the outskirts of Zacatecas were larger houses with arcaded courtyards, and groups of buildings surrounded by high white walls topped

by little turrets like sentry boxes, presumably a relic of less quiet times. The town is still, and has been for centuries, a great centre of silver mining, and we were pleased to assume that the great carts we saw, each with a team of eight oxen, were filled with the ore.

The line descended rapidly from Zacatecas in many sharp curves. We passed a round platform like a threshing floor, where some boys were playing at bull fight; and then Guadalupe de Leon, with its imposing church. Soon after this night fell, and it was quite dark when we reached Aguas-Calientes, famous, as its name implies, for its healing hot springs. Here we were besought to buy drawn-thread work, for which there are several workshops at Aguas-Calientes. Most of the output goes to the city of Mexico, though some of it is peddled at the station. With less persuasion we bought some baskets of strawberries at fifty cents Mexican (one shilling) a basket. The fruit was small, but welcome.

Next morning the country was more agricultural and trees were more frequent, especially one with a willow-like foliage. There were great fields of maguey, or American aloe, planted in rows. This is a plant of many uses. The fibre of its leaves is woven into cloth, or twisted into rope and lariats, and from the sap is made



Zucatetus



pulque, the national spirit. The cylindrical cactus was now quite common, often grown close together so as to form a very compact and serviceable palisade. Finally, the green rolling land, dotted with many trees, took quite an English look, but there were always good-sized mountains in the background. As we had omitted to put our watches back the requisite forty minutes at C. P. Dias we got up earlier than we intended, and saw many peasants going to their work, walking or riding little donkeys, from whose sides long sticks trailed to the ground, as in the pictures of Indians moving wigwam.

As we entered the basin in which the City of Mexico lies, the line ran for some distance on a shelf cut half-way down one side of the Tajo de Nochistongo. This is a deep cutting made by the Spaniards at the beginning of the seventeenth century to drain the valley of Mexico. It was originally a tunnel, and then was made an open cutting. It cost an immense amount in labour and money, was never very successful, and is now abandoned. It is 150 to 200 feet deep, and 300 feet wide at the top. The length is about $12\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and it is, especially considering the time when it was made, a wonderful work.¹

¹ The exact figures seem to be: length, 67,537 feet; extreme depth, 197 feet; and extreme width, 361 feet. It was not finally completed in its present shape till 1789.

The mountains that ring the city round were shrouded in mist, but the weather was brilliantly fine, as it had been all the way from New Orleans, except for one little shower on Sunday afternoon.

We reached the City of Mexico on Monday morning at 10.30, two minutes late—72 hours or 1800 miles' journey from New Orleans.

CHAPTER III

THE CITY OF MEXICO

THE City of Mexico has seemed for many years completely out of the world, although quite lately it has again begun to attract attention. It has about 400,000 inhabitants, and was for more than two centuries the largest city in North America. In spite of its great altitude, it lies in such an extraordinary position that it has always been impossible to satisfactorily drain it by natural means. It is situated in the middle of a great basin, surrounded by high mountains, including on the southern edge the snow-capped volcanoes of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, that rise to a height of more than 16,000 feet. There is no natural escape through this ring of hills for any stream, and all the water collected within the ring of the basin drains down through several lakes, till finally it reaches Lake Texcoco. The city is quite close to this lake, and is supposed to drain into it. But the fall from city to lake is very small. When the lake was at its normal

level the city drained into the lake, if the lake rose equilibrium was established, if it rose higher the lake drained back into the city with disastrous results. Among other results was an appalling death-rate in summer, when heavy showers and consequently sudden freshets are common. This drainage question and the liability of the city to inundation have been a source of anxiety ever since the Spaniards have been there. It was this that led to the cutting of the great Tajo de Nochistongo at the beginning of the seventeenth century, which, however, was never fully successful. In 1629, for instance, the city was flooded, and remained so as a Venice *malgré elle* till 1634, when an earthquake opened a fissure in the ground and let the water escape—an effective remedy, but one rather difficult to regulate. These difficulties have, it is hoped, now been surmounted. A drainage canal has been dug from the city to the eastern mountains, some thirty miles long, with a communication to lead the surplus water of Lake Texcoco into the main canal. At the point where the canal reaches the mountains a tunnel $6\frac{1}{4}$ ¹ miles long, with a suitable fall, has been bored, so that a proper outlet is now provided for the drainage of the city and valley

¹ The exact figures are: for the canal, 47 kilometres and 527 metres; for the tunnel, 10 kilometres 21 metres.

towards the Gulf of Mexico. This tunnel was opened with some pomp while we were in the city, and it is hoped it will have solved the great problem that has vexed rulers and people for 300 years.

Although, according to its latitude ($19^{\circ} 26' N.$), Mexico is well within the tropics, yet its great elevation makes its climate comparatively cool and very equable. At night it is apt to be quite cold. I noticed the maximum and minimum temperatures for one twenty-four hours while I was there, and I think they are to some extent typical. They were maximum, in the sun 86° , in the shade 76° ; minimum in the shade 46° and on the grass 36° . In fact the temperature is so comparatively low that the new-comer forgets the strength of the tropical sun, and it is only when he incautiously steps out of the shade and feels the sun like a leaden weight come down on his head that he remembers where he is and retreats. The principal difference between summer and winter seems to be that in summer there is a little rain every afternoon and in winter a little wind. While we were there the wind blew daily for a couple of hours after lunch, and catching up thick clouds of dust made driving at that time rather unpleasant.

Owing to this climate the vegetation is by no means tropical, rather more like that of the

Riviera. The useful eucalyptus abounds, and some very fine trees like large acacias, a kind of native cypress. There are many plants of the fleshy and repellent order, aloes, cactus and the like, while the flowers were principally what gardeners at home call "greenhouse stuff" rather than "stove plants," calla-lilies, arbutelons, and so forth. But after all the city was not a good place to study the flora, as it was only in a few public gardens and private courtyards that it could be seen.

The city is laid out in rectangles following the lines of the Aztec city, as an ancient map in the Museum shows. In the east is the Plaza Mayor, with the Cathedral on its northern side. In this square also are the national palace and the national pawnshop (Monte de Piedad), long, low buildings of some age but no great beauty. Round the other sides are buildings with "portales" or colonnades made of the projection of the first storey over the pavement on columns. Under the portales are some good shops, mostly hatters' and hosiers', and between the arches many little booths. Most of the Plaza is laid out as a garden, and is rather the lounging-place for the lower classes, as the Alameda is for the upper. The Cathedral has another little garden in front of it divided from the Plaza by a road and high railings, and to one side of the Cathedral is the

flower market; a large kiosk which we always found somewhat bare, probably because we were too late in the day.

At the western end of the town is the Alameda, a public park planted with many shady trees, and in spite of names much larger than the Plaza Mayor. Connecting the two Plazas is the principal thoroughfare, Calle San Francisco. A little beyond the Alameda is a circus with a bronze equestrian statue of Charles IV. of Spain, commonly called "the Bronze Horse," and from this the Paseo de la Reforma runs straight to the Palace of Chapultepec—now the President's summer palace—perhaps a couple of miles. This is a broad avenue of tall trees, eucalyptus, I think, with circuses or glorietas at intervals for statues. At present only two of the glorietas are occupied, one by a statue of Columbus and one by a statue of an Aztec warrior, Cuantemoc, but there are also some statues along the sides. It is the fashionable drive for Mexican society, and is altogether a fine if unfinished boulevard, and one of the principal vestiges of Maximilian's brief empire.

Although the principal street may be, and is, referred to as Calle San Francisco, this is only for the sake of convenience. According to the system in vogue in the City of Mexico, and I hope nowhere else, every length of one of the main streets between the crossing of two side streets—

every "block" in the American phrase—is distinguished either by a special number or by a totally fresh name. Take for instance seven consecutive blocks in the Calle San Francisco, and their names run thus: Puente de San Francisco, Plaza de Guandioa, Prima Calle de San Francisco, Segunda Calle de San Francisco, Tercera Calle de San Francisco or Calle Professor, Prima Calle de Plateros, and Segunda Calle de Plateros. More than this, each block has its own set of numbers beginning with number one. Happily the blocks are not long, so that no series of numbers ever gets very high. The shop where I used to get photographic supplies had for its address either Calle del Professor No. 1, or 3^a de San Francisco No. 1. The system seems cumbersome and inconvenient, and as the naming of the blocks is quite arbitrary, it is no help in finding one's way.

The streets are fairly broad and clean, as clean as those of most big cities, and cleaner than many. On the whole they are well paved, though in some of the less central parts the paving is of cobblestones, very serviceable, no doubt, but very trying to drive over. A bad smell is so rare as to be at once noticed when met with. In this respect the City of Mexico has been much libelled, or more probably has improved greatly.

The houses are for the most part stuccoed and painted white, the lower windows barred. They are generally built round a courtyard. In the larger houses the view in through the ever open doors is very pleasant, of the well-swept court gay with plants and surrounded by columns, between which easy outside stone stairs lead to the upper floors. The carriages seem to live under these stairs, and the horses are groomed in the middle of the court. One of the most striking houses is at the corner of 1st San Francisco Street. It has apparently two courtyards, one behind the other, and is covered outside with blue and white tiles with stone mouldings and facings. There is some proverb to the effect that a house of tile is the height of extravagance, and so perhaps its builder found, for it is now the Jockey Club. In the poorer quarters, though rich and poor are very much intermingled, the peeps into the courtyards are not so restful—children, chickens, and drying clothes. The shops are not very good, having rather the air of being too far from the centres of modern civilisation. Most of them have distinctive names, as "La Noche Triste," referring to an incident in Cortez' conquest, "El Globo"—this is a confectioner's—"The Fashionable," "Los Brownies," and so on. Very noticeable are the pulque shops at the street corners, their

walls frescoed with all manner of scenes in blatant colours, and their fanciful names displayed in enormous letters. The open doorways are often decked with gay fringes of coloured paper, and several tempting rows of gaudy bottles rising behind the bar counter to the ceiling, form a background for the proprietor and his white-clad lounging customers.

In addition to the Cathedral there are many churches in the City of Mexico. The most striking parts of them externally are the elaborately carved doorways, sometimes rising up to the roof, and the finely panelled doors.

The streets are fairly full of traffic. In several of them are tramways—"travias," as they are called—of which only one route is operated by electricity and all the others by donkeys. The gauge is very narrow, and the trams little four-wheeled things. There are two donkeys to each tram, and when they have once started the concern they go at full gallop—for the city is almost if not absolutely flat—the tram pitching and lurching along behind them. The driver—a regular stage villain in appearance—has little driving to do. He holds the reins and blows a horn when the reckless equipage approaches a crossing. The tram lines carry many other loads besides ordinary passengers. Furniture can be removed on them by means of special long, low



platform cars. One day we met a funeral on the line. In front was a little open car draped in black, on which was the coffin. It was drawn by two horses also draped in black, and driven by a man in top hat and sombre clothes. Behind came several trams containing the relatives and the wreaths, and labelled "Funebre."

The cabs are nearly all closed ones—four wheelers, of course—drawn by two small horses and driven by a ruffian, I speak of outward appearance, in a sombrero. On the private carriages, too, of which there are a good number, the men wear sombreros as part of their livery. Different grades of cabs are distinguished by different colours, though as this colour is only a strip on the door panel and a little flag on the roof, it is not always easy to tell the class of cab at a distance. But it is important to make sure. The 1st class is the blue, and of this superior kind the number is small. Their charge is \$1 Mexican (about 2s.) an hour, so that even the most expensive cab is not very dear; the 2nd class cabs are red, and charge 75 c.; the 3rd class yellow, and charge 50 c., and finally the white, which charge I believe 25 c. But acting on expert advice we only tried blue and red cabs, and on the whole they were clean and good. But the drivers are rather reck-

less, given to galloping round corners, and the harness is apt to break, so that cab-riding in Mexico has some of the excitement of a sport.

But more characteristic of the streets are the numberless donkeys which do most of the carrying. Sometimes they come in droves of ten or a dozen, each with a load of hay twice his own bulk. They seem to need no driving, but amble along in front of the "ass-herd" like a flock of sheep. Often a single donkey passes under an enormous load of wood or pottery, or perhaps a milk tin slung on either side, and a man or boy sitting on the very tail dangling his toes in the dust. The donkeys are very small, and seem willing and well treated. What carrying the donkeys leave undone is mostly done by porters, who go along at a brisk pace in spite of the big loads on their backs, secured by a strap across their foreheads. Often two will pass carrying all manner of furniture on a stretcher between them.

There are not many people on horseback as a rule, but the few that do appear amply atone for their comparative rarity by the brilliance of their get-up, especially on a Sunday. The horses though small are very handsome, and are harnessed with a bridle of horse-hair or maguey fibre, and a saddle of brown leather elaborately tooled or embroidered, very high at pommel and

cantle, with a metal boss on the former, while the stirrups are large and square, and inlaid with silver. Sometimes there is a piece of light-coloured shaggy fur hanging on either side from the saddle behind the rider almost to the ground. The rider, if in his Sunday best, has a sombrero of felt elaborately ornamented with thick cords of gold or silver and embroidered with the same; his jacket is short and tight, and his trousers fit like a skin. They have silver braid down the seams, or a double row of little bright buttons, or are strapped with a violently contrasting colour. One orange-coloured pair we saw had a stiff sort of frill of the same stuff and colour projecting for about three inches all down the side. This gay get-up is the dress of the *charro* or country squire, and he alone among the upper classes seems to cling to the native costume. But the little roundabout jacket and tight, decorated trousers are still the dress of the middle class in Mexico. The trouser is so tight over the boot and comes so low over the heel that in wet weather the careful man does, or perhaps can, only turn up this back edge over his heel. The lowest class wear white cotton clothes, straw sombreros, and sandals, and the boys' dress is a miniature of their fathers'. Perhaps the most indispensable part of the costume is the *zarape* or blanket. This is, or should be, of

wool, woven on a hand loom, and about four feet by seven or eight feet. The colouring is gay and, especially in the older ones, beautiful. They are worn all the time, for the Mexican says that what will keep out the cold will keep out the heat. The most orthodox way of wearing them is to put the head through a hole in the middle ; but as to this there is no hard-and-fast rule.

The women's dress is not so distinctive, in fact, the *riboso*, a shawl with long fringes, worn over the head by the Indian women is almost the only novel garment. We saw hardly any mantillas, but were told that the ladies still wore them when going to mass in the early morning. The Spanish women still wear shawls, but sombre ones, no longer gaily coloured or embroidered. Their faces are so heavily powdered as to be the reverse of attractive. The Indian women wear their hair in braids, and some of them are pretty, but more have strong, sensible faces. Some of the men too have striking faces, and many of the younger ones are handsome ; particularly they have fine eyes.

There are many street vendors, either carrying their trays on their heads or presiding over them in shady corners. The trays are heaped with bright-coloured fruits or sweetmeats. Of beggars there are very few, and what there are are not importunate. Sometimes if we were standing at

the door of the hotel some old woman or little child passing by would think the opportunity too good to let slip, and, after a moment's hesitation, stretch out a brown hand; but these seemed only dilettanti and not professionals.

No account of the City of Mexico would be complete without mention of the police. I always found them most kind and willing to be of service so far as the language difficulty would permit. They have blue uniforms and white kepis, with a revolver at their belts, and are much in evidence. There are some mounted police to be seen at times, for instance in the Paseo, to regulate the afternoon traffic. At night each policeman has a lighted lantern, which he places with great apparent trustfulness in the middle of each street crossing, so that in a long street you can see a line of these twinkling lights. As the streets are already well lighted the lanterns cannot be for illumination, and I believe they are more for purposes of discipline, that the inspector may see at a glance if all his men are at their posts. Owing to this excellent police system the City of Mexico is nowadays, I fancy, as safe as most big cities, at least in the better quarters. I do not suppose the lower quarters are particularly safe at night, but they are not in London, or New York, or Paris.

CHAPTER IV

SIGHT-SEEING

IT was Monday morning at half-past ten when we reached this city and the sun was bright and oppressive. We drove in a little bus over some of the worse paved streets to our hotel in the Alameda. It was called the Sanz, and was new and small. The old and much larger hotel is the Iturbide, once the palace of the Emperor Iturbide, a phantom ruler of the early part of the nineteenth century. The main part of the Sanz was built round an open courtyard of two storeys, each storey having a colonnade. From these the rooms opened by glass doors which also served as windows, for other light there was none. Thin curtains hung between the columns, and could be drawn or looped back so as to regulate the light or shade. There was a fountain in the middle of the court, and the general effect was handsome. The shady side of the lower colonnade formed the principal lounging-place. The hotel was very clean, owing to the fact that the housekeeper, or "mistress

of the keys," was an American ; though on this point she found that the manager, a Frenchman from Porto Rico, did not always see eye to eye with her. The prices were, for Mexico, high. We paid \$2.50 a day Mexican for a room without meals. This is about 5s. a day, but then our rooms were not of the best. In fact, at first they said they could give us no rooms, but finally, after telephoning fruitlessly to other hotels, discovered some in a wing. These also opened on to a veranda, and as the only window was the door, we had to choose between dressing by electric light behind shutters, or taking the risk of a passer-by, though certainly our veranda was not much of a thoroughfare. In some ways the rooms were well equipped. They had fixed wash-basins ("h and c," as the house agents say), and over the bed head hung two knobs, one the electric bell and one to manipulate the electric light. There was little light and plenty of dust, and most of the time we were there a hand pump was going under our windows, as something had gone wrong with the water supply ; but these were not very serious objections. To finish with the hotel, we found the food good but monotonous and without much local colour, except for weird and doubtful fruits. We had an excellent fish called red-snapper, a native of the Gulf, and

I say "an excellent fish," advisedly, because though we were in Mexico for a week we had red-snapper twice a day and every day, a test which not even the best of fishes can undergo with undimmed reputation.

Our luggage arrived at the hotel soon after ourselves, carried on the backs of porters, awful looking ruffians. An express agent had boarded our train near the city, just as he would near any city in the United States, and these porters were his express waggon. The rest of the morning was devoted to elaborate toilets with a view to getting rid of the accumulated dust and cinders, and the afternoon to strolling and a visit to the Bank where, as elsewhere in Mexico, they did not seem to consider time as money.

For dinner we went to the Café de Paris in Calle Coliseo Viejo, recommended to us as the best restaurant in a city where the restaurants were generally good. Perhaps our friend's memory had idealised it, for we found a dingy, deserted place which, if left to ourselves, we should never have entered. We had a "private room," or little box divided from the vulgar gaze, when the vulgar were there to gaze, by six-foot partitions covered with gay wall-paper. However, the things were clean and the fish—the specialty of the house—excellent. It must be remembered that the City of Mexico is less

than a day's journey from Vera Cruz, and therefore from fish. There were also eggs *à la Mexicaine*, that is, dressed with tomato sauce and Chili peppers, the sting of which can never wholly fade so long as tongue and palate last. The place was nearly empty and very dull. I hope we did not find the best restaurant in the City of Mexico, for this would imply no very high standard.

On Tuesday morning we prowled about the streets, and took occasional snapshots of donkeys loaded with twice their own bulk of hay, and muzzled with pieces of sacking lest they should transfer their load; or of the Mexican method of street washing. According to this an old manual fire-engine with two rows of men to pump is placed up a convenient side street, and from it a hose is carried on men's shoulders or little boys' heads to the man at the nozzle.

In the afternoon we took a cab and drove for about twenty minutes through a rather slummy part of the town, where the pavements were abominable, either by natural vice or from efforts to reform them, and so came to La Viga canal at Embacadero. The afternoon wind had begun to blow, and as our cab happened to be an open one, we had a first and full experience of the dust of Mexico. La Viga is a shallow

canal connecting the city with Lake Texcoco, and is much used both for goods' traffic and, especially among the lower classes, for pleasure-trips. After some bargaining we engaged a boat to take us to Santa Anita and back, a trip of about an hour and a half. The boat was a large and heavy punt, with two long red-covered forms along the sides. Over the forms was a light wooden top, from which hung strips of cotton of the Mexican colours. These looked gay, and though their flapping in the wind was rather vexatious, we knew that to be stylish one must put up with slight inconveniences. We were propelled by a young and distinctly good-looking Mexican, who kept up a running fire of repartee with the girls on the bank, which was evidently witty, though, unhappily for us, unintelligible. He punted us from the bow by sticking a pole into the mud as far forward as possible, and then dragging the boat up to it.

The scenery, if such a name is not too dignified for the dusty banks and the spindley trees, was not beautiful. At one place a great factory, apparently a distillery, lined the banks; at another, one of the queer, little, curtseying trams kept us company. The chief feature was an elaborate sort of water-gate with an arch so low that to get under it we had to take down the awning and crouch in the bottom of the boat.

In fact, nothing could have been tamer than the banks, but for this the life and movement on the canal amply atoned.

There were boats of all sizes ; the biggest, flat-bottomed barges loaded deep with wood. Some of the smaller boats had round tops of bamboo covered with mats, which gave them an Oriental air, like the picture of Chinese river craft, an impression that was heightened by the boatmen in high-crowned straw hats, white shirts, and white trousers rolled high above their knees, leaving their fine chocolate legs to view. This was done for the practical reason that, if punting or poling failed to move the boat, they could step out into the two or three feet of water and push or pull it. There were also several boats like our own with parties of Mexicans out for the day, one party having with it music in the shape of a sort of zither and a ten-stringed guitar. To provide for the needs of such trippers were several bum-boat women, paddled about in dug-out canoes of the simplest form. They besought us to buy their wares ; but, as they kept them covered up with a napkin, and we could not understand their description, no business was done. About half-way to Santa Anita was a little village where, under a row of shady trees, a market was going on. A number of boats were moored on the bank, piled high with bunches of lettuces,

radishes, and the like, arranged with wonderful neatness. These boats, with the trees and the little row of houses as a background, the white-clad boatmen and the chattering women, combined with the silent but ceaseless traffic on the canal to form a picture of great animation and picturesqueness. Santa Anita did not look so attractive, so we did not go to see its floating gardens, but returned to Embacadero. It was a delightful trip, and the fact that we were the only foreigners on the canal, which is evidently a resort rather for the poorer Mexicans themselves, gave it additional novelty and interest.

In the evening we went to the Circus Orrin, a perennial entertainment in Mexico. I believe its specialty is the acting by children of burlesques on plays running in the town, but this we did not see. What we did see was a performance half in a ring like a circus and half on a stage like a music-hall. Next the ring were the stalls, then the boxes, and then the cheap seats, where some very unwashed people sat, with apparently only a curtain between them and the outer air. The audience was small, and men wore their hats and smoked everywhere. There were many white-kepied police on duty, but their services were not required. The performance was quite good, especially the clown's interludes. One new item, of the nature of the

box-trick, which was to create a sensation missed fire, because in an unlucky moment the mechanism of the box revealed itself. It was interesting to notice that most of the performers had Anglo-Saxon names, and appeared as "Los Potters, Los Bannack, Mr. Jones y Sutton," which gave the programme rather a hybrid air.

On Wednesday morning we drove to the Palace of Chapultepec, for which one of the party had obtained an order the previous day at the U.S.A. Legation. The palace stands on an abrupt little hill some two miles from the city at the far end of the Paseo de la Reforma. The steepest side of the hill faces the city, and the palace is built just on the edge of this. The avenue starts just below the palace and winds round the back of the hill in a long slope ; just by the entrance gate is a little door which apparently communicates with the cellars of the palace, and if this were open to the casual visitor he would save about a quarter of a mile. We left our carriage at the gate, as there was a steam roller our horses did not wish to pass, and walked up. There are some fine trees, the finest we saw in Mexico : eucalyptus, which cannot be very old, because they or their ancestors must have been imported from Australia or Tasmania ; and Mexican cypresses, some of which, I believe, are very ancient. These have a fine acacia-like

foliage and a rough, scored bark that comes off in laths, thick trunks and short branches. The castle is a low building of no architectural pretensions lying along the top of the hill, and impressive only because of its length and its position.

We entered the first courtyard through a gate guarded by one of the military cadets. The military academy has long occupied a part of the building, and during the war with the United States the cadets defended the place against the Americans, and a monument to those who fell in the defence stands in the palace grounds. On one side of this courtyard is a terrace from which we had a fine view of the City of Mexico and its churches, with the two towers and dome of the Cathedral especially conspicuous ; of the green well-peopled valley, and of the lower hills. There was too much haze to see clearly the more distant mountains, though it was possible to imagine that one of the white masses of cloud was a snow-covered summit.

Going through the second gateway we came to the palace proper, where an attendant took charge of us. By no means was he the usual stiff and liveried personage, but a lively little man in mufti whose English was but small. The palace itself is neither very interesting nor splendid. The finest rooms are the bedroom for

the minister in attendance and a saloon upstairs. The dining-room is heavy but effective. The guide took great pains to explain to us just where each member of the presidential household sat at table. He also pointed out to us as we went round the various places where the President was in the habit of taking his coffee. To judge from the guide's remarks, the President has at one time or another taken his coffee in every sheltered nook in or about the house, which is probably the case. There are very few traces left of Maximilian's occupancy, merely one or two pieces of furniture and several handsome silver centre-pieces marked with a capital M under an imperial crown. But if the interior is disappointing, the views from balconies and terraces are superb, and there is a charming garden on top of some of the ground-floor rooms forming a kind of higher courtyard where roses and geraniums, iris, plumbago and honeysuckle were blooming, mingled with other flowers which we did not know.

As we drove back down the Paseo the horses continually tried to bolt. They were not the ordinary little horses of the country, but full-sized and seemed to be too much for our little coachman. After they had nearly got away several times, and we had attracted a considerable amount of attention, we got out and walked

home, a less glorious method of progression but more certain to attain the end we sought.

In the afternoon we went to the Cathedral. The trees of the little garden in which the Cathedral stands have grown up rapidly, so that while in the earlier photographs it was possible to get a good picture of the fine façade, the later ones show only the towers and the gable rising from a mass of foliage ; perhaps a more picturesque *tout ensemble*, but at the expense of the architectural effect. The first stone of the present church was laid in 1573, and the bells hung in 1792, but the main part of the building was done in the seventeenth century. The chief features of the façade are the elaborately carved central doorway, which is carried up to the roof, and the tower on either hand. The upper part of each tower is an open colonnaded belfry, and each is capped by a bell-shaped cupola. These doorways and these bell-capped towers seem the distinguishing feature of Mexican church architecture, and give a slightly barbaric but beautiful distinction to what might otherwise be commonplace renaissance buildings.

Internally the Cathedral is cruciform with short transepts and long nave, and side aisles to the nave and chancel. The architecture is simple, a late renaissance, and the colour mostly white stucco with grey facings and pilasters. Many of the side chapels, however, are full of gilding and



paintings, and they are often enclosed by elaborate wooden grills reaching to the roof. The church lies almost north and south, the great altar "of the kings" being at the north and the principal door at the south. The main altar is under the dome at the crossing of the arms. A wall is built across the nave connecting the southernmost column of either aisle, and against the south side of this is set an altar, "the Altar of Pardon." This wall directly faces any one entering by the main door and forms a kind of vestibule. It also forms the south end of the choir, which occupies the centre of the nave, the aisle arches for five or six bays being filled up with elaborate wooden partitions to form the walls. The organ is in the northern bay of the choir on either side, and its splendid wooden case is built up quite into the points of the arches. We were told its tone is fine, but did not get a chance of hearing it. The north end of the choir is closed by a massive metal screen with gates. This is by no means elaborate, but very impressive from its size and from the simple dignity of the design and the ornamentation. It is made of a metal called tumbago, a mixture of gold, silver, and copper, of a splendid bronze colour with gleams of silver. Low railings of the same metal and workmanship and of like excellent design lead from the choir gates to the main

altar which they encircle. At intervals along the top are figures of children about eighteen inches high, forming candelabra. The choir is lined with stalls, and in the centre is a lectern for the music books, which have enormous notes, designed to be read from any and all of the seats. The main altar is poor, but the altar in the apse—that “of the kings,” which is a great mass of gilt and painted carving rising to the roof—has under the influence of time become no longer gaudy but imposing.

The Cathedral was fairly full of worshippers, some very ragged and dirty. A service was just ending, and the priests were coming out of the choir in white garments with queer streaming sleeves. Some went to hear confession, and we noticed that neither confessor nor penitent was in any way concealed.

Adjoining the Cathedral is the Segario Metropolitano, a small church in the shape of a Greek cross. This has a doorway even more elaborate than that of the Cathedral, and carried up in a sort of false façade—above the line of the roof. The doors and door screens are, as usual, beautifully panelled.

The rest of the day we spent in buying elaborate sombreros and whetting our appetites by a first glance at the temptations in the old curiosity shops.

Thursday was another fine bright day, but very dusty. In fact the sun and the dust were such constant factors that they hardly need be mentioned. The dust especially was all-pervasive, covering everything, invading everywhere. It was useless to brush it off, for it settled again at once, and it was as well to resign oneself to it.

All morning we spent at an old curiosity shop with the quaint name of the "Hole in the Wall," where we bought some old lace mantillas as well as various modern things—pottery, silver filagree, and rag-figures.

In the afternoon we went to see a game of pelota in a court near the Bronze Horse. Going in through a large room where men were drinking and playing dominoes, we bought our tickets and went up to the first gallery of the court. The game is of the racquet family, and is played in an enormous court about the same breadth as a racquet court, but apparently two and a half times as long.¹ There is a service wall, a left-hand wall, and a back wall which is about half as high as the others. On the right-hand side there are three galleries running the length of the building, in front of these several rows of seats; and between the seats and the cement floor of the court a strip of soft earth two or three yards wide.

¹ I believe the exact length of the court is 200 feet, and the breadth of the front wall 36 feet.

The service and back walls are only the same breadth as the cement floors, so that the seats and galleries are set well back out of the way, especially as most of the play is down the left-hand wall. The court was marked out more or less like a racquet court, and the balls seemed to be like court tennis balls. Instead of racquets the players had peculiarly shaped baskets fitted to their right hands by a kind of glove. These baskets are curved in their length and semi-circular in section. They measure perhaps two feet along the curve and narrow towards the point. At their broadest they are wide enough to easily catch the ball, but at the point only just large enough to let it escape.

The players serve from alternate courts, striking the service wall above a certain line, and so on as in racquets, but it did not seem necessary to have the service in order to score. The game may be for twenty, twenty-five, or thirty-five points, and probably for more. When we went in a four-handed game was in progress between the whites and the blues—*los blancos* and *los azules*. The players, I believe, are all Basques and all professionals. A number of book-makers in red berets walked up and down in front of the seats shouting the odds, which varied with every point made, and making a great deal of noise.

The game was a very fine one to watch. The

players caught the ball in their baskets on the volley or first bounce, steadied it an instant, and then with a vigorous swing sent it whirling out of the point, which being so small allowed them to place the ball with great accuracy. Sometimes they took the ball on their right, but the game was to keep it as near as possible to the side wall, and so most of the play was back-handed, and in taking back-handedly they generally put their left hand also on the basket to give greater force. As the court was so very long and the balls heavy, the game was not very fast ; but it must have been tiring, as it took a tremendous swing to get the ball up with good speed from the back end of the court. The players were very brilliant, taking all sorts of apparently impossible balls. Often, especially when taking a ball off the back wall, the gathering and returning were done in one unbroken sweep. Only once or twice was a gentle lob against the service wall attempted, and then it was so effective that we wondered it was not tried oftener. The book-makers made all the noise, the audience taking matters very quietly ; but once a player was rewarded for a particularly brilliant stroke by a couple of dollars being thrown to him.

After the four-handed game they played a short game for six players. First A played B, and the winner played C, the winner played D, and so

on. Each couple played one hand, and the winner scored one point, and at the end the final victor was he with most points.

The rest of the afternoon was spent at the shop of the Sonora News Company, so called, I believe, because originally started to supply books and papers on the railway, but now also employed in selling Mexican opals, filagree, sarapes, carved leather, and drawn linen work. Some of this last, made by a particular family who only turn out a dozen or so pieces a year, is marvellously fine. It looks like engine turning on the back of a watch or steel engraving, so delicate and accurate is it.

CHAPTER V

UNDER SEÑOR MORENO

FRIDAY morning we devoted to the National Museum, which occupies the back part of the National Palace. This is an enormous, rambling building on the east side of the Plaza Mayor, containing besides the Museum the Senate Chamber, the offices of the various departments of the Federal Government, and some official apartments for the President. The Museum is built round a charming little courtyard full of all manner of plants and flowers, as the present director is an eminent botanist. There was no turf, as that seems either undesired or unattainable in those parts, but many little beds bordered by tiny hedges, in which semi-tropical plants grew side by side with daisies, irises, and beautiful white violets. Sitting motionless on one of the little dividing paths were two great hawks as big as guinea-fowls, one a veteran of forty-seven years, blind of one eye and too tame to need tying up; the other a younger bird, tied but quite tame.

The Museum is divided into sections, of which one or two only are visible each day of the week. On Fridays the archæological section was open, one great room in which are all the Aztec monoliths. Exactly facing the entrance is the so-called Calendar Stone. This is an enormous circular monolith weighing some 24 tons (24.400 kilogrammes) and measuring some 11 feet (3m. 55) in diameter, carved on one face. It was discovered in 1790 during some excavations in the Plaza Mayor, and set up on edge against the western wall of the Cathedral, as can be seen in old photographs, when its lower edge was used as the standard in measuring levels. It was removed to the Museum in 1885, where it is still set on edge so that the carving can be properly seen. The carving is low relief and in concentric rings around a grotesque face, all the rings being divided into small compartments containing various symbols, and some being broken into by what look just like the points on a compass card. The exact significance of all the symbols is not agreed upon. Some authorities hold that it was a votive monument to the sun, around which sacrifices were made, and call it the Sunstone. More generally it is considered as a sort of calendar in which the divisions of Aztec chronology are represented — 5 days to a week, 4 weeks to a month, 18 months to a year, and 52 years to a cycle, besides



various intercalary periods—and also as telling the priests when the religious festivals occurred, or as a Farmer's Almanac in which various emblematic animals and plants seemed to show the various seasons for planting and so forth. But this is a matter of deep learning and great controversy. The stone has shared the fate of many Aztec relics, in that it disappeared at the time of the conquest, and did not again see the light till long after the generation of Indians who could interpret it had passed away, and even their traditional lore had vanished.

The little we learned about the Calendar Stone was the little that we could understand from our guide. This guide we picked up in the Museum, and so long as he stuck to us we found him very useful. He was by name Señor Moreno—Mr. Brown that is—and by profession a civil engineer. But being for the moment unable to get any work, and being moreover engaged to be married, but lacking the necessary cash, he was not above turning an honest penny by acting as guide to the wandering, and presumably wealthy, foreigner. He had been in Chicago as secretary to the Mexican Commission of Mines at the World's Fair, a post he hoped to get also at the Paris Exhibition. He had also been in New York and St. Louis, and had altogether been so many months in the United States that we

thought his English should have been better than it was. However, we managed to understand one another generally. He seemed to have some influence in the proper quarters, as he obtained several favours for us. One of these was permission to photograph in the Museum, only granted on condition of our sending copies of the photographs to the director. As those we took were nearly all of the courtyard and the garden, they can hardly have assisted archæological research to any great extent.

Besides the Calendar Stone, there were many enormous stone figures of gods with appalling names—Huitzilopochtli, the god of war, as huge and hideous as his name; Chac-mool, the god of fire; Chalchihuitlicue, the goddess of water, another enormous monolith. There were a great many coiled snakes or snakes' heads, as apparently each Aztec house used to possess one or the other. The Sacrificial Stone has a gruesome interest. This is a circular slab, more than eight feet in diameter and thirty inches high. On the edge is carved a succession of fighting warriors, or of conquerors bringing their captives to the sacrifice. In the centre is a depression, in which the victim's head was placed, and a trench to carry off the blood. Near it is a smaller stone to hold the heart of the victim. The explanations here given of these stones are those our guide gave to us, and are

presumably those popularly accepted; but over the first one at least hangs a cloud of controversy, from which appear at intervals the stately Spanish titles of the savants or the hendecasyllabic and prickly-looking names of Aztec heroes and deities.

Most of the sculpture is in low relief, ugly and grotesque, with marvellous intricacies of ornaments, clothing, and plumes of feathers. But some of the fully carved figures of the gods are simple and more lifelike, and a few of the separate heads are passably good-looking. In some of the pieces there is a striking resemblance to Egyptian work, and one or two of the faces are evidently Chinese, fresh *causæ belli* for the archæologists.

From the monoliths we went to another section, which must have been a broadly historical one, as it contained many specimens of Aztec pottery and arrow-heads, as well as Maximilian's state coach and his ordinary carriage, both made in Milan. The first is a most gorgeous vehicle, and is an excellent contrast to the simple republican carriage of General Juarez, the "Abraham Lincoln of Mexico," as our guide called him. Here too was the Aztec map of the city, hanging unprotected on the wall like an ordinary schoolroom map. Considering its value this seemed to us very careless, till it was explained that the

maguey fibre cloth on which the map was drawn would perish if cut off from the air by a glass.

After this our mysterious guide obtained permission for us to see a section not usually shown on Fridays, where were the portraits of the Viceroy of Mexico, an extraordinary collection of uglinesses, an excellent contemporary portrait of Cortez, some old furniture, and a bust and portrait of Maximilian, with Dundreary whiskers. In several enormous glass cases were the remains of Maximilian's service of plate, some 750 pieces out of the original 3000, all crowned and cippered. He was evidently determined to be the complete Emperor, so far, at least, as accessories were concerned.

There were also relics of Juarez and Hidalgo—the "George Washington of Mexico"—but after the real interest and importance of the archæological section the rest of the Museum, whatever it might be to patriotic Mexicans, to us seemed tame.

From the Museum we went to the "Monte de Piedad" on the opposite side of the plaza. This, the State pawnshop, is no shamefaced shop in a side street, but an institution in the main square of the city, housed in a handsome building, with a marble bust of the pious founder, a gentleman who lived towards the end of the eighteenth

century. We had been told that it was sometimes possible to pick up interesting old jewellery or curios there, but unhappily there had been too many others before us on the same errand, and we could find nothing attractive, and soon came out.

From the Monte de Piedad we took a cab to go to the hotel, but having gone a certain distance one of the hind wheels stuck and refused to revolve any longer, so we had to take another cab. With this we had no better luck, for when we were nearly at our hotel, a cart wrongfully cutting across in front of us caught our pole in the spokes of its wheel. It did not seem to have done any damage, but when we got to our hotel—only a few yards away—we did not stop as soon as we expected. It was a closed carriage, and hearing a commotion in front we hastily alighted, to find that the pin of the pole had snapped, and the pole had slipped right under the carriage, that one of the horses had kicked and broken its trace, and that the coachman, by manfully hauling in the reins, had pulled his horses round till they were facing the carriage, their heads almost on his knees—further humours of the Mexican sport of cab-riding.

After lunch Señor Moreno called to take us to the Yturbide Theatre to a function for which he had got us permits. The Yturbide Theatre is

now used by the lower house of the legislature as its meeting-place, since the burning of its own hall. The ceremony was an apotheosis of General Mata. So far as I remember, he was one of the heroes of Mexican independence, whose ashes, having been taken from their original resting-place, were now to be formally re-interred in the City of Mexico. The President was to attend, and as we were rather late we passed in through rows of doleful gentlemen in the deepest mourning and the guard of honour, just as the President's escort was appearing down the street, and were in some fear of being greeted by the national hymn.

Our guide took us upstairs into a box next to that occupied—at least in theory—by the diplomatic body, and our places were excellent. The theatre is large, with several rows of boxes. Where the stage must have been, and where presumably the Speaker's chair now is, was an erection draped in black and surrounded by wreaths and plants on which rested a black casket. In front stood four motionless pall-bearers or watchers. There were a fair number of people present, but the theatre was not crowded, and every one was in black except the President's aides-de-camps, who were in uniform.

Just as we were seated, the President came in. He is a commanding-looking man with white

hair and moustache, a military bearing, and a strong face, in which there is some resemblance to the negro type. He was far the most striking man present, and the one we should have picked out as the President if asked to choose at a venture. We had a very close view of him as he went out.

As soon as the President was seated he rang a little bell and the proceedings began. These consisted of three long orations in Spanish read by the President of the House of Deputies, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the President of the Court of Justice. As they were so badly read that even if they had been in English they would probably have been unintelligible, their dreariness may be imagined. The only moment of interest was when one of the lights round the catafalque, being a kind of theatrical torch, fell off its stand and made a little blaze. Then there was an instant's excitement and a running forward of frock-coated gentlemen, among whom we noticed that the President was the foremost ; but this over, the speeches resumed their interminable and inaudible length. Finally the casket was removed to a six-horsed hearse, and the President and other notables started to follow on foot ; but as the cemetery was six miles away, probably there were carriages waiting round the corner. As the procession moved off, the

Mexican national hymn was again played—a fine tune.

After dinner we went to the “Teatro Principal.” It impressed us to see three cavalry troopers at either end of the street in which the theatre was, and police at intervals down its length. At home one would have thought a riot was expected, here it seemed the usual thing. Perhaps in Mexico a riot is always expected, though it seldom comes. The theatre is a big one and old, having been built in 1752, but, like most things Mexican, lacks smartness. We had a box, no great extravagance, though very few of them were occupied. The programme was in four parts—four short musical plays—and as it was possible to take tickets for all or any of them, the audience changed at short intervals. We had tickets for all four, but only sat out the first two. The first was a comic opera called “Giants and Dwarfs.” As the orchestra played loud enough to drown the singing—perhaps on purpose, for only one singer was at all passable—and as we could understand nothing, we were not very much entertained. The second scene of this play was more amusing in a Drury-Lane-pantomime style when the giants appeared, and there was some dancing and better singing.

The second piece was a Spanish version of “La Navarraise,” which may be very fine if well

and audibly sung, but as it was it nearly sent us to sleep. After this we left. The performance had begun at 8.30, and it was now 10.30. As there were two more plays to come, the theatre must have closed late.

On Saturday morning, under Señor Moreno's care, we drove out to Guadalupe, the seat of the most famous shrine in Mexico. To it countless pilgrims come every year, and I believe it is officially recognised as on a level with Lourdes. It lies some three miles north of the city along a straight, broad, dusty road, raised on a sort of causeway. This road was crowded with country carts, each with one horse in the shafts and one harnessed alongside. On arriving at the city limits the extra horse is taken out and left there till the homeward journey. There were also innumerable *burros*, their bodies hidden by enormous loads slung pannierwise, and their tiny little legs appearing below. If our carriage had touched one of these loads in passing, as several times looked very likely, it seemed as though it must have sent donkey and load spinning off the road like a top.

At Guadalupe are three churches, all dedicated to the Virgin because of the following story. In the early part of the sixteenth century the Virgin appeared here to a pious Indian, bidding him go to the bishop and say that she wished a church

built on that spot. This the peasant did, but was not believed. A second time the Virgin appeared, and a second time the bishop was incredulous, demanding some proof. Yet a third time the Virgin appeared and bade the Indian gather flowers, which had miraculously sprung up on the top of the hill where no flowers had ever before been seen, and take them to the bishop as the proof he demanded. This the Indian did, and when he arrived at the bishop's palace there was found on the cloak of maguey fibre he was wearing a miraculous picture of the Virgin. Then the bishop believed, and a great church was built on the spot where the vision was seen, and the miraculous picture set up over the high altar where it is to this day. A spring of healing water which gushed out from the place where the Virgin stood at one of her appearances is covered by a second church, and the third one crowns the hill, marking the spot where the flowers grew.

The church which shelters the picture is in the little plaza of the town, and there we went first. It was dedicated in 1709 on the site of the earlier shrine, and was renovated and embellished between 1887 and 1895. It is an exceedingly handsome Roman Catholic church, with a marked absence of anything tawdry or tinsel. It is the ordinary basilica shape. The walls of

The Cathedral, Guadalupe.





the nave are finely frescoed with scenes from the legends of the place. The presbytery is raised ; on it under the dome is the high altar, and under it are buried the bishops and archbishops of Mexico. On the lower level before the high altar is a fine kneeling figure of Monsignor Labistida y Davalos, the archbishop during whose reign the restoration was carried out. The high altar of white marble is very dignified and encloses the miraculous picture.

Unhappily, the picture is too high up and too badly lighted, at least on ordinary occasions, to be properly seen, but judging from photographs it is a figure of the Virgin about half-life size, surrounded by rays of light, drawn in rather a stiff, conventional style and attitude, but with a face of some sweetness and beauty. The picture, so we were told, has been examined by a committee of experts, who said that it was painted on maguey fibre cloth such as the Mexican peasants still wear and have worn for centuries, that the painting was the same on both sides, but that they could not say, or at least could not agree, how it was painted. There is, I believe, no doubt that it is of the age claimed for it, and the fact that it is still in good preservation after centuries of exposure to the smoke of candles and incense does not make it any less miraculous in the eyes of the Indians.

Above the picture is a great crown, given in 1895 by the women of Mexico, or more correctly, I believe this is only a replica, the original being kept in the treasury. The women gave their jewels, but the setting and workmanship, enamels, and so forth, are said to have cost £6000.

The church is certainly wealthy. Four flights of steps lead from the nave up into the presbytery, and all of them, as well as the front of the presbytery, are protected by silver railings about three feet high and of a most massive though simple design, the gift of a Spanish Viceroy. All the many chandeliers in the church and the enormous candlesticks by the altar are also of silver. On one side is the Chapel of the Sacrament, divided from the church by a tall grill and gates of very great beauty made of a dark wood with silver embellishments.

From the great church we went to the Church of the Well, a quaint, mosque-like building covered with tiles. The well is in a sort of vestibule, and is protected by a fine wrought-iron railing and cover. The devotees draw up the water in copper vessels chained to the rails and drink from them, which one would fear must distribute as much disease as the waters may heal.

We lingered a little outside this church to buy some of the quaint-shaped, gaudily coloured

pottery made in the neighbourhood, and then climbed the long winding flight of shallow steps that leads to the church on the hill.

On the way we passed the stone sails of Guadalupe. This is an erection of stone representing the mast of a ship with yards and three square sails swelling in the wind. It is full size and looks very odd standing out from the green hill-side. It is the result of a vow of some storm-tossed sailors, who swore to the Virgin that if she would deliver them from their peril and bring them safe to land they would erect in her honour at her shrine of Guadalupe the foremast and sails of their ship. According to one account the actual mast and sails are built up in the stones.

The little church on the hill is only a very simple country church after the splendours of the great shrine below, but its white walls looked beautiful against the clear blue sky, and it had an interesting arrangement of bells over the façade, two on either side of the ridge pole in little open belfries. Standing with our backs to the door of the church we had a beautiful view of the valley of Mexico, the reverse of that we had had from Chapultepec. The City of Mexico was in the foreground with the dome of the Cathedral most conspicuous, Lake Texcoco to the left, and the invariable ring of hills closing the distant view.

Unhappily, again the great snow peaks of Popocatapetl and Ixtaccihuatl were but dimly visible through the haze.

Beside the church is a beautiful cemetery with shady trees, where we rested for a time, and then came down by a shorter way to our carriage, and drove back to Mexico.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUDING

OUR Sunday was much more Spanish and Catholic than Protestant and English. In the morning we went to the Cathedral. Mass was being said at the Altar of Pardon just within the main door, and around it was a little knot of worshippers, but the main service was at the high altar. When we arrived the Host was being carried in procession round the altar by a priest under a canopy, the poles of which were held by laymen. Acolytes with burning candles and smoking censers were in attendance and a small crowd followed, mostly people of the lower class in ragged clothes and sandals. When the procession stopped, as it did at intervals, all knelt. When the circuit was completed, the priests returned to the altar and Mass proceeded. The scene then was very picturesque, the high light spaces of the vaulting above, the priests in their splendid vestments moving on the steps of the altar among the candles and incense, the dull gold of the massive railings, and all about, the devout,

white-clothed congregation. Men and women, mostly of the poorer sort, knelt motionless on the stone floor, their eyes turned to the altar, and we were again impressed by the reverence of the Mexican worshippers. Many of the men brought their dogs to church, and nothing could have exceeded the propriety of their behaviour. They paid no attention to one another, walking or sitting in solemn aloofness. One little dog we noticed particularly sitting motionless near his kneeling master, taking in everything about him, but not offering to stir in spite of the constant stream of men, women (and dogs) that ebbed to and fro on the outskirts of the congregation as always in a large Roman Catholic church. Once, some careless passer-by trod on his tail, but it elicited only a momentary and irrepressible protest, to which the surrounding worshippers paid no heed, and he re-settled himself a little less in the beaten track. The music was disappointing, and the organ hardly played at all, while the singing was very Gregorian.

When we had left the Cathedral we found, after a great deal of trouble, the Thieves' Market, of which we had heard. This is supposed to be a market to which any thief who has managed to keep his booty for three months may bring it, and there sell it and give the purchaser a good title, and therefore to be a place

where it might be possible to pick up bargains in curios. This does not sound a very likely story, at least nowadays under the strong hand of Diaz, but I give it for what it is worth and as told to us. Many of the stalls are now kept by the owners of the regular antiquity shops, who charge you a little more than they do at their shops to repay them for their trouble. The market is down a court near the National Palace, but we did not see very much, in fact, only some stalls loaded with old iron. As the people looked unpleasant, and the smells certainly were, we quickly came out and went to hear the band—a good military one—in the Alameda.

In the afternoon we went to the bull-fight. Fights are held only on Sundays and feast-days. Laws are constantly passed to prohibit bull-fighting, but they are as often repealed. Still, it is supposed to be under a cloud, and the best people do not go to the fights, nor do the papers report them; at least that was the case when we were there, but, then, no great matador was fighting. When a celebrated matador comes from Spain, as they do occasionally, on tour in great style (one had lately been staying at the Sanz, he with his valet, and his wife with her maid), the case may be different.

Señor Moreno had promised to come and

guide us to the fight, but he proved faithless, so we had to do the best we could with our very limited Spanish. The bull ring is just outside the city, down a very dusty road, and is simply a great roofless ring of seats. The better places are in the shade, for which one must pay extra, but even these were on this afternoon by no means full, though a number of the boxes at the top of the ring were occupied, largely it seemed to us by English and Americans.

Six bulls were to be fought, but we only stayed to see two. The first bull killed no horses, but was himself most clumsily killed by the matador, who had to make five attempts at it. The second bull killed three horses. Anything more sickeningly cruel than to thrash and spur these poor blindfolded screws up to the bull, simply to be gored to death, I cannot imagine. Yet it was greeted with shouts of *bueno toro*, and was evidently enjoyed. If the horse escapes, as I believe he should in theory, if his rider be very expert, it is a disappointment. The killing of the horses forms the first stage of each fight, and is supposed to be done to tire the bull. In the second and final stages there is more skill and nerve needed, and there is less rank cruelty. The second part brings out the *banderillero*, whose duty it is to stand in front of the bull without even a cloak

for defence, and, as the bull charges, to reach over his horns and from the front place two barbed darts in his shoulder, and then at the very last moment to step aside. The final act is that of the matador, who is supposed to kill the bull as he charges by one stroke of his sword delivered from in front. This, too, needs much nerve and knack. The second matador we saw did dispose of his bull this way. The capadores, or men with cloaks, whose business it is to distract the bull's attention or to draw him over to any desired part of the ring, also display great agility and coolness. But the two main impressions left are—first, the abominable cruelty to the horses, and in a lesser degree to the bull, who has, at least, a chance of revenge; and, secondly, the exceeding folly of the bull, who always allows himself to be drawn aside by every fluttering cloak, instead of putting an end to one or more of his assailants.

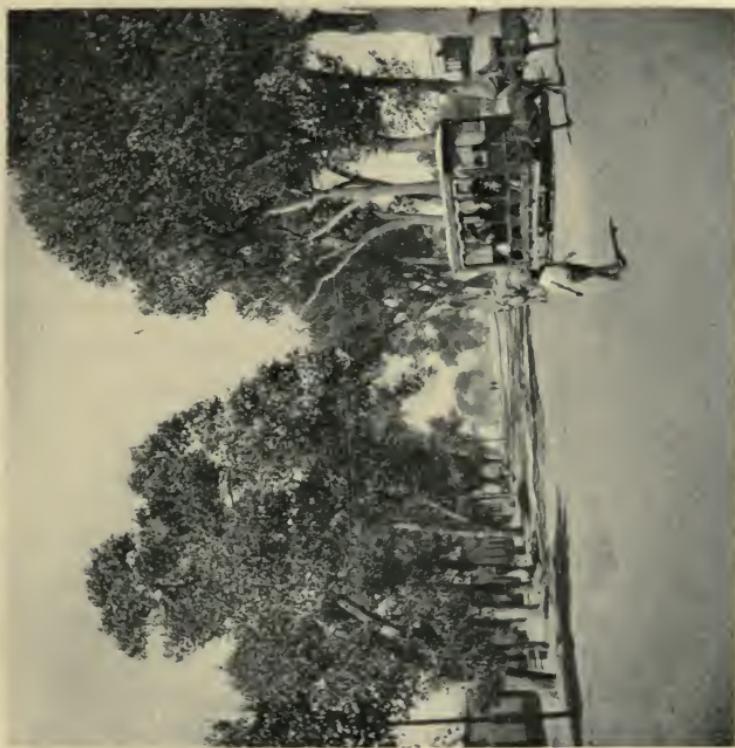
We came out feeling rather ashamed of ourselves at having been in, and with hideous visions of dying horses that seemed unwilling to fade.

Afterwards we drove in the Paseo, where the band was playing, and all Mexico riding or driving. We saw some fine carriages and some magnificent horses and riders in full Mexican array. As we returned, just at sunset we had

our first clear view of the great snow mountains —Ixtaccihuatl, an irregular mass with several summits; and Popocatapetl, a fine volcanic peak, with the unbroken sweeping lines of Fuji-Yama.

On Monday evening I left Mexico. This Monday was a great day in the city, being the Feast of St. Joseph, when business ended at noon, and all the churches were full. I travelled straight through to New Orleans, and of the return journey there is little need to speak. On leaving the country we had the novel experience of two customs' examinations, one on either side the frontier; the Mexican one being, I believe, to find if we were smuggling out any silver ore, and the United States one being, as usual, to discover if by chance we had anything not liable to duty.

During the week or ten days since we had gone south the desert had blossomed like the rose. Great patches of the formerly arid land in Northern Mexico and Texas were golden with tiny wild flowers, among which at intervals there were the large yellow flowers of a sort of evening primrose. Farther north the ground was purple with a sweet-smelling verbena. This sudden beauty was due to rain that had fallen during the week. The nearer we came to New Orleans the more numerous were the evidences of heavy



Aguas Calientes.



rain, the water lying in all the hollows and furrows of the land. During the two days I was in New Orleans it rained almost continuously, and the rain continued northward till we got to Washington, when it changed to snow. A week or so after I got to Baltimore, the rain persisting, the Southern Pacific line westward from New Orleans was washed away in many places and communication suspended.

THE PACIFIC COAST



CHAPTER I

SOME OIL-FIELDS OF CALIFORNIA

BAKERSFIELD would call itself a boom city. It lies on the line from Los Angeles to San Francisco, about 300 miles north of the former. Its *raison d'être* is the discovery of oil in the neighbourhood a few years ago.

We arrived there one day in January 1902, four days after leaving New York. "We" were the Chairman—*amerisé*, President—of a Company newly formed to work an oil-field near Bakersfield, and myself, a shareholder in the same, and we had come to inspect our recent acquisition. We had come by way of Chicago and thence by the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé line. This line keeps well to the south, through Kansas and Arizona, and so avoids the high passes of the Rockies, which are apt to be choked with snow at this time of the year. Even as it was we had some difficulty with snow on the pass, at least so we were told, for we crossed it at night and therefore in oblivion. The scenery is not very fine and is laid out in

broad belts, five hundred miles of agricultural land, five hundred miles of desert, and so on. But the Arizona scenery has a character and interest of its own. The hills are flat-topped and all more or less the same height, and look like the remains of some ancient plateau at a higher level than the present plain, to which their perpendicular sides drop down either in one great cliff or in a succession of huge steps with a slope of débris at the bottom. The colour is a warm red, and in the clear atmosphere every detail shows up distinctly across miles of sandy scrub-covered desert. Sometimes a stratum of rock of a contrasting colour can be traced for miles along the face of the cliff. In some places the rock has crumbled into all manner of fantastic shapes, castles, and pinnacles and turrets. In this part of the world too we saw many Indian children, who swarmed round the train with pottery to sell. These were of a semi-civilised or civilised tribe who inhabited adobe villages to be seen in the distance, with an adobe church in the midst. These churches were a sort of model of Mexican churches, with the two dome-capped towers in the façade and a cross on the gable, all reproduced in adobe.

The other most interesting region was the Mojave Desert near our destination, this time

a desert of smooth yellow sand some forty miles across, with mirages of beautiful lakes on the horizon.

On arriving at Bakersfield we went to the Southern Hotel. This hotel stood at the crossing of the two main streets, one of which was called 19th Street, though it would hardly seem that there were nineteen streets in the whole town. Diagonally opposite was the rival hotel, "The Arlington," now quite out of date, having been built in 1890. It had two broad verandas running round it, and at the back "Scribner's Opera House." According to the bills, the "Black Patti" troupe were then performing there, and soon afterwards there was to be a boxing contest. For a little way down each street were brick buildings with imposing iron façades, balustrades, &c., but these soon gave place to wooden ones, often of the tiniest, sometimes surrounded by a little garden, sometimes only by a wire netting, sometimes without even this. Only a few rose to the dignity of a villa. After the wooden houses came shanties and tents. In one place was a sort of tent-hotel with small tents in rows and a large eating-tent—beds 25c. a night. The town straggled on for a couple of miles in one direction and perhaps a quarter of a mile in the other. It is difficult to give any idea of its utter newness

and unfinishedness. The main streets were paved, and had real side-walks not plank ones ; but very soon the roads became broad sandy tracks between untidy wooden fences covered with advertisements of the marvellous shops of the town. Happily the sand was of a kind that packs well, and was sprinkled with oil to keep the dust within bounds, so that driving over it was rather soft and pleasant.

On the day of our arrival there was some rain. It was, to be sure, but a tiny shower, but even that was a thing to be noted because any rain is so rare, and if none falls in January the farmers may almost resign themselves to a year's drought. All day long the hills that could be seen at the east and west ends of the streets were capped with clouds.

In the streets was a certain appearance of bustle ; but we soon noticed that this was largely due to the restless nature of the inhabitants, which caused the same "rigs" to appear again and again, like the soldiers of a stage army, and when we could recognise all, or almost all the traps—as we could in an hour or so—the illusion of a large traffic was destroyed. In a similar way the line of trolley cars seemed to be entirely served by the cars numbered 3 and 4, and though we watched eagerly for 1 and 2, they never appeared, and we finally concluded they

were phantoms, invented in order to make the Company's rolling-stock seem double its actual proportions.

Most of the vehicles were of the light four-wheeled American sort, but, by way of contrast, would come a tow of two waggons loaded with timber, and drawn by a team of six mules. The front leaders seemed to have some slight connection with the following pairs, but for the most part pulled directly on a chain that passed from them under the first waggon to the second. Later, we saw an oil-cart, possibly the Bakersfield "watering-cart," with six horses, and the driver seated on the near wheeler, whence he both drove the team and by means of a rope in his hand worked the brake on the cart.

I need hardly say that electric light and telephones were universal, and that the youth of the town disported itself greatly on bicycles.

I never noticed any churches, and indeed heard there were none in Bakersfield—except a Salvation Army barracks—a remarkable fact, because a place of the size of Bakersfield in America almost always has not one but several churches.

The day after our arrival we went out to the Kern City oil-fields, about seven miles away. We drove in a light rig along the "dirt road," as they call any soft, unpaved road, and after five miles turned off into the open country.

All this part of the world consisted of low round hills, with fairly steep sides of firm, heavy, brown sand. They are absolutely bare of vegetation, except an occasional low cactus, and though our driver told us that a little rain would cover them with wild flowers, we had to exercise much faith to believe this, as it seemed of the nature of the miraculous. The surface is so smooth that you can drive anywhere so long as you do not try to go along too steep a hill-side and get turned out. Between the hills were dry water-courses, like tiny cañons, three or four feet deep, with steep, cracked, crumbling sides, and these had to be carefully circumnavigated.

But if the hills were bare of trees, they were bristling with oil-derricks—light, square, wooden erections, sixty or seventy feet high—very like the derricks at the mouths of coal-pits.

When it is decided to bore for oil a derrick is put up, and beside it a little shed for the engine. The boiler is generally some yards away in the open on a brick foundation, packed with gypsum, of which there are hills in the neighbourhood, and fed with oil.

The engine is connected with the drill by the most primitive machinery, as far as possible of wood, a "walking-beam," a "calf-wheel" or band-wheel, and a "bull-wheel" or winding-wheel. The drilling is easy, passing through

various strata of clay and of the sand in which the oil is found, until the main oil sand is struck at a varying depth, but generally from 900 to 1100 feet down. Water is often found on the way down, sometimes in such quantities as to make it useless to try farther for oil, or sometimes oil and water can be pumped from the same hole. This is very welcome in a country where water is a very costly item. (One small Company near Bakersfield paid £50 a month for water, which, in proportion to the rest of its expenses, was enormous, and for that got two tank-carts full a day hauled a distance of five miles.) If you are in luck, and not necessarily therefore in the majority, you find oil in paying quantities. It may spout up like a geyser, carrying derrick and all before it, but these "gushers," though sensational, are often short-lived; it may flow gently out, but more generally, in this field at least, it has to be pumped up. The drill is taken out and a pump put in. As a rule, the engine is moved away, and begins to drive a drill in another well, and so on till three or four wells are going on the same property. But all the pumps will be operated by one central engine, by means of ropes radiating from it and carried in loops on a primitive sort of gallows for a hundred yards or more to the different pumps. Labour is thus reduced to a

minimum. These cords, moving slowly to and fro, the pumps, with much grunting and coughing, pumping up the thick, black oil—all minding their own business, and minded by nobody—have a very uncanny air.

The oil comes out in a more or less continuous stream, semi-liquid and evil-smelling, though the smell of oil is so pervasive from the time that you leave the train at Bakersfield that it is no more noticeable at the oil-well than in the hotel, and so can soon be neglected.

The oil flows into a reservoir, where the sand is allowed to settle, and then is drawn off into tanks, or sent along pipes to storage tanks for shipment. In the reservoirs it forms little lakes of an extreme and polished blackness, in which the derrick is sharply reflected. Around the edges of these lakes were the black oil-coated bodies of multitudes of beetles and dragon-flies, still with extended wings, that had alighted in the oil thinking it water, and found out too late their mistake.

The derricks are scattered irregularly over the hills, and about them in still more promiscuous fashion are the engine-houses and bunk-houses in which the workmen live. Most of these are tiny wooden shanties, surrounded by heaps of empty food tins. Some look a little better, and even as if they might have traces of comfort, but



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on the whole this life seems to have all the disadvantages of "roughing it," and none of the advantages, such as solitude, fine scenery, or game.

There were no enclosures of any kind, and we wandered about and inspected everything, not only unrebuked but welcomed; probably we looked like "suckers from the east," that is, innocents from New York, possibly with money. As we were watching a reservoir of oil into which the pumps were sending a steady flow of black sticky-looking stuff, fit to gladden the heart of any shareholder, one of the owners came up. He was a mild blue-eyed man, with a magnificent red beard, evidently of recent growth, on whom his mining clothes did not yet seem to sit naturally. He was very pleasant, and allowed us to lunch in his office. He afterwards tried to sell us some oil land, not that that we had seen already flowing with oil, but some land still untried, though in a very likely looking position. Surface indications, by the way, seem to be useless in telling if there is actually oil beneath, and one of the best guides is the production of neighbouring wells, especially if very close.

No business was done in our case. The blue-eyed man had been "raised" in Minnesota, and been a chemist there and in Los Angeles, but had abandoned drugs for oil, with very gratifying

results. Under his guidance we made a fairly complete tour of the field, going along very steep hillsides where, to our unaccustomed minds a spill seemed often inevitable, but never came off.

The next day being a Thursday we set out to see our own oil-field, the real aim of our long journey. Getting up at 5.45 we had a very hasty breakfast, and caught car number 3 or 4 to Kern City Junction, on a very chilly morning. We were to go to a little place called M'Kittrick, some sixty miles away. To it there was only the one train a day, namely, the 7 A.M., also only one train back, which on Thursdays started at three in the afternoon.

At Kern City we picked up the manager of our Company. He had come in on the previous day to see the Chairman, and had gone with us to the Kern River field the day before ; but he had found by experience that to catch the 7 A.M. it was better to sleep at an inferior hotel at Kern City rather than in the comparative luxury of Bakersfield. He was a most interesting person, a direct and recent importation from New England, well used to roughing it, and most anxious that we should do likewise so as to open our minds. He looked very much like Mr. Penley in "The Private Secretary," but one thing was certain, that in any matter of bargaining the Westerners would find him their equal if not superior. He gave us in-

teresting pictures of M'Kittrick, where he said only one man had been shot since he had been there ; but then he had only been there a fortnight. Although it had connection with the outside world by telegraph, and more intermittently by train, the nearest officer of justice of any kind was at Bakersfield, where, too, churches and Sundays also ceased, if indeed they had got so far.

We found the 7 A.M. train to consist of a string of empty tank-cars with one very small and ancient passenger-car at the end. The fact that the latter was much over-heated by a stove was at first rather welcome than otherwise. Among the other few passengers were a dirty Italian family that kept us company only part way, and actually a couple of "drummers"—*anglicé*, commercial travellers—though one would have thought M'Kittrick beneath their notice. The conductor, who was to be seen most of the time reclining on a seat with his feet on the stove, was known to all and sundry as "Broncho Bill," a name with plenty of local colour, though it seemed a little out of place on a train. He was a man of action as he had need to be, for many of his passengers were very rough, and recently he had turned five rowdies off at the point of his revolver. The journey of sixty miles took three hours, being for the most part slightly uphill across the plain

to the western foothills, and being hampered by much stopping and shunting. While still in the plain we passed a large stock-farm in an inviting oasis of green, but for the most part our way lay through a desert and ended suddenly in a desert with a sparse crop of the now familiar derrick.

M'Kittrick is, I suppose, like hundreds of other mining camps, and is distinctly a place to get away from when the first novelty has worn off. There are some thirty or forty wooden houses, shanties, and huts scattered about in haphazard fashion, though a few are grouped on either side of a great sandy waste so as to outline faintly a possible street or square.

Some of the more pretentious houses are built up square in front so as to suggest a second storey, but this is generally only a false façade. About three-fourths of the houses are some sort of drinking place, and many are called hotels, though this is only a more dignified name for a bar and does not promise beds. There is one general store at least, which is also the post-office, where a most surprising number of things may be bought—thanks, I suppose, to such drummers as we had brought with us. Here, too, the proprietor is always ready to throw dice with you for five-cent cigars. Many of his goods were displayed on the piazza, and there they would remain all



Mr. Killtrick.



night, for though drinking and gambling, and in consequence a certain amount of promiscuous shooting, were common, stealing seemed to be unknown. Close to the town on the west rose a range of hills on the lower spurs of which the town rested, and to the east a flat plain gradually fell away to Bakersfield and to the other hills where we had been the day before. The plain was dotted with low greyish scrub, and under the brilliant sun showed streaks of grey and purple like the sea.

At the post-office we found the Company's "rig"—a recent bargain of the manager's. It had two good-looking very rough ponies, and was itself the ordinary long flat box on four wheels. Two movable seats were put across from side to side, and as there were springs under these as well as under the body of the cart, we soon found we had our work cut out to remain seated over the bumpy places. We were driven by our cook, who was really a "tooly," or blacksmith, by trade, but cooked when out of a job.

After some consultation it was decided to drive to the camp, some three or four miles, by the new road which, as it was begun yesterday, would probably be finished to-day. This sounded incredible, but it was not for us to question. We soon saw that road-making is a very simple operation. The hills we had to cross were small

and round and steep-sided, hardly any of them too big to make a sporting hole at golf, such as the "Himalayas" at Prestwick. The old road or track in a fine Roman spirit ran straight up and down. But this new road wound scientifically round the shoulders. As the hills were all of sand a few minutes shovelling soon cut out a road, and then a sort of snow-plough with a team of horses was run over it, leaving a most inviting flat, smooth surface. To be sure it was very soft, and one vehicle passing over it ruined its good appearance, but at least you did not tip over on the side of the hill.

When we got out of the sand-hills and on to the plain even this road ceased. Nor was any road necessary. The ground was quite flat and firm, and as the waggon was light and the horses harnessed far apart and native-born, scrub bushes of two or three feet high were simply driven over if in the way. The only danger was coyote holes (all the natives of this plain seemed to live in holes—coyotes, rabbits, tarantulas, and scorpions). Their burrows had very thin frail roofs, so that a horse would certainly step through. Of this the horses were aware, and nothing would induce them to cross a burrow.

So we arrived at our own particular oil-derrick. This field is a comparatively new one and the derricks were few and far between, and not

many of them producing. At our camp drilling was only about to begin.

The horses were taken out and tied by their heads to the wagon, on the floor of which some feed was spread. This was all their stabling, but when the summer came they would have to be given a roof to protect them from the sun. There was not very much to be seen at the camp. The derrick was completed, and the boiler, packed in gypsum and fed by a roaring jet of oil, had so much steam up that it was sending it out by various chinks it had no business to have at all. But then it was only a second-hand affair, and as it was quite by itself in the open, if it did blow up it could not do great harm. It was interesting to see the riggers finishing the various wooden parts of the engine, making a great walking-beam and turning the band wheel true by means of steam from the engine and a horribly discordant sort of chisel. They expected to start drilling the day after we were there, but it hardly seemed possible to us.

We strolled over to the edge of the claim to look at a brook of oil which oozed sluggishly along in a miniature cañon, and was ocular proof for us that there was oil in the land. It was either the careless surplus from a well actually in operation among the hills, or else a natural overflow from some high-lying bed of the oil sand.

In any case, though it sounded magnificent, it had neither much bulk nor much value.

We came back for lunch to the bunk-house, a very small place in which seven men somehow managed to live. Remembering the meals at another mining camp I did not expect anything but the barely edible. In this we were pleasantly disappointed. The cook was in his way an artist, and by the help of canned things gave us an excellent meal. He bewailed the fact, however, that as he had for some reason not expected us till the next day he had not been able to carry out his menu as originally intended. His *chef d'œuvre* was an iced cake that would have done credit to Buszard's. His meat larder, by the way, was a row of nails outside the door, where in that dry atmosphere meat would keep for weeks ; his fuel was lumps of asphaltum picked up anywhere in the neighbourhood, a cheap but very dirty fuel, and every drop of water had been hauled five miles.

Soon after lunch we started back, this time by the old road, which was simply a succession of short but desperately steep hills ankle deep in dust. But we arrived at M'Kittrick right side up and intact, rather to our surprise, and back to Bakersfield in time to catch the night train for Los Angeles.



Our Oil Well.





CHAPTER II

THE GRAND CAÑON

THERE was rain enough that night, torrents of it, in fact, and when we got to Los Angeles about half-past seven on Friday morning, the streets were swimming in water.

There we had several days' lotus-eating or, to put it more accurately, eating the early strawberry and green pea. But we did not wholly abandon ourselves to this pursuit, but kept enough energy to see some of the sights of the neighbourhood.

On the Saturday we made an early start, and went on what is called the "kite-shaped" trip. This starts from Los Angeles and returns there, and would be a round trip except that the route traversed is more like an irregular figure of eight. It is rather ingeniously managed, as a special car is provided which is dropped by one train at some point of interest, and then picked up some hours later by another train, and so on till it arrives back at Los Angeles.

We had so far been in a desert part of Cali-

fornia, now we were in a garden, and the difference was mainly due, I believe, to irrigation. There seemed to be little or no vegetation that had not been planted. We passed miles and miles of orange orchards where the trees stood in straight rows stretching away to the vanishing point. They looked beautiful with their classical foliage and yellow fruit, but the ground beneath them was perfectly bare. Other fields were full of naked sticks that we were told were fig trees. There were long rows of the much-travelled eucalyptus to serve as wind-breaks. In a country where every drop of water is valuable, obviously none can be spared to keep the fields covered with green; but this land of fruit and flowers and midwinter summer is rather disappointing, because of its strictly utilitarian aspect. Nor do the frame houses add any romance to the scene. From the point of view of the tourist the United States suffer very much from their homogeneity. As they have the same language throughout, though the accent differs, so in all but some of the older settled places there is the same architecture, with slight modifications; and it is monotonous to find in California, among orange trees and palms, the same frame houses that you left in New England. This is obviously a necessary consequence of rapid settlement and expansion.

At most of the stations were large buildings and warehouses, and so forth, belonging to the various fruit companies which controlled the district.

At Redlands we drove out to see some famous gardens, and in fine weather they must be very beautiful. As it was we drove through semi-tropical vegetation, bamboos, eucalyptus in many varieties, and what not, under a cold downpour of rain. At Riverside, where we lunched, the avenues of palm trees in the streets contrasted oddly with the very American-looking buildings and the mud under foot.

The beauty of this part of California seemed to me to lie in the villas and gardens on the outskirts of Los Angeles and in the neighbouring small towns. Even these were not to be seen at their best, for we were between the blows of flowers, the Christmas blow and the February one, and the recent rains had dashed such flowers as were out.

In the evening we saw Modjeska as Lady Macbeth. At first her slight foreign accent was noticeable, also the fact that she is elderly; but as the play went on these blemishes were forgotten.

On Sunday afternoon we went out to Santa Monica, some fifteen miles, on an electric car. The trolley cars of Los Angeles are excellent.

Those lines that run out into the country are more like light railways. The cars are nearly as long as an ordinary bogie railway carriage, and the track sometimes goes across country, sometimes runs along the road on a slight embankment. They travel at a good rate of speed, and carry small searchlights in front, which are very blinding when in the city streets, but necessary in the country. It was amusing to sit on the front platform of the car on the return journey, and see the posts carrying the wire flash into the light a hundred yards off one after the other as we whirled towards them.

The line to Santa Monica ran through low green hills—a refreshing contrast to the brown ones we had seen so long. The little town had, however, a decidedly out-of-season air, being used principally in summer by day-excursionists from Los Angeles. But there were some pretty gardens, and there was, moreover, the Pacific. When we had got out to the end of the little pier, and were right over the waves, I felt we had indeed crossed the Continent. The ocean lay perfectly calm except for a slight heaving—“the breathing of the Pacific”—and naturally looked just like any other ocean, but yet seemed to have a glamour over it denied to the North Atlantic.

On the afternoon of Monday we went to see

the ostrich farm at Pasadena, which, by the way, is run by an Englishman. The birds are in large runs or paddocks, either in flocks of young birds, or in pairs. They were quite tame and excessively curious, running eagerly to inspect any visitor. The guide or keeper told off to show us round—who had started life as a gardener in England and gone through all the steps to “head”—fed the birds with smallish oranges. The oranges were bolted whole, and as often as possible, so that soon the ostriches’ necks looked like well-filled Christmas stockings. The older cock-birds and their mates have pens to themselves. They all have names, such as President M’Kinley or Edward VII., and look as magnificent in their black and white plumes as any ostrich can, allowing for their unfinished and unclothed appearance at the best. Some of the old cocks are “very mean”—that is, bad tempered—and need careful handling. Our guide teased one old bird till it finally gave the “challenge to fight,” in which the bird sits suddenly down, raises his wings, and lashes his head and neck to and fro in a sort of frenzy. It was very interesting to see, but perhaps this may help to explain why some of the old cocks are so mean.

We left Los Angeles that evening on our return journey, and next morning were running again through the wonderful Arizona scenery.

About midday we crossed the Colorado River by a fine iron bridge at the Needles. It was a fair breadth, and had there escaped from the Great Cañon where we were going to find it. We had heard reports of very severe weather in the Eastern States, and towards evening the distant hills had a sprinkling of snow; and as we started to climb the scene became more wintry. At Williams, the junction for the Grand Cañon which is some 6000 feet up, we found snow and hard frost.

From Williams a branch line leads in three hours to the lip of the cañon, and a primitive hotel. On this line there is but one train a day, and in order to make a good connection we had had to come, not by the *train de luxe*, but by a more ordinary conveyance. The principal practical differences were that the pace was rather slower, the stops more frequent, and that as there was no dining-car we had to get out to snatch our meals. The eating-houses were, on the whole, well appointed and the food good. The drawback indeed was that they tried to give one too much in a limited time, and this, combined with the feeling inseparable to meals on a journey of must-eat-now-or-you-never-know-when-you-may-get-another-chance, would, I think, produce disastrous consequences if kept up all the way across the Continent.

From Williams a ridiculous little train of two cars, with an old-fashioned wood-burning engine, took us off into the night. The engine made a great deal of bustle, and threw off a continual shower of sparks that would have done credit to any fifth of November. The hills were very steep, and there was a good deal of snow already, and more was falling, so that we had a little doubt if we could get through, and having got through, if we could get out of the wilderness again.

The three hours in the overheated little car seemed to stretch out interminably, but at last, about ten o'clock, we stopped. There were a few lights to be seen, but no station. The principal notice to stop, in fact—for I need not say there were no signals or other such signs of over-elaboration—was the fact that the rails went no farther. We discovered in the morning that there was some pretence of a station, inasmuch as a sign-board, bearing the words "Grand Cañon," rose abruptly beside the line.

In a moment lanterns appeared, and by their help and that of a great engine head-light fastened to a tree, we found our way up the newly made path in the snow to the hotel. There were about nine or ten inches of snow everywhere, and more to follow, and the night was black and misty. We passed some out-

buildings and tents, used in the summer by excursionists, but now looking anything but inviting in their covering of snow, and then turning sharp to the right, came to the hotel. It was just as well to turn, because, though no sign of it could be seen on such a night, the mouth of the cañon, with a drop of 6000 feet, lay a few yards ahead in the straight path. This sounds more exciting than facts might bear out, as owing to trees near the lip, and the slope in the sides of the cañon, one could not have fallen more than a few hundred feet at the first intent.

The hotel, which rejoiced in the name of Bright Angel Hotel after an old trail of that name, was originally a log cabin. This still remained, and looked picturesque and inviting, with a long fringe of icicles from the roof and a bright glow through the windows. It had added to itself various wooden buildings, more or less adjoining, so that twenty or thirty people could be put up. There were perhaps a dozen while we were there, including the ubiquitous German tourist.

The interior was very inviting, but desperately overheated, a fact, however, we did not at first quarrel with. The bare logs of the walls were hung with gay Indian blankets, and more of these were on the floor. A small counter in one



corner enclosed the office, and in the centre was a great wood-fed stove. On one side opened a similar room, intended more especially for ladies, with an open log fire, and on the other a more orthodox dining-room.

Around the fire in easy chairs and attitudes were half-a-dozen men of the real frontiersman type, long in the leg and loose in the limb, with drooping moustaches and flapping slouch hats. Probably they all had revolvers, though I was disappointed in seeing no evidence of these. They were the guides for the cañon, and also the various porters and hangers-on of the hotel. One indeed was the proprietor, though he was identical in all respects with the rest, and neither claimed nor received any deference. When the train conductor came in carrying the tiny mail-bag the circle was complete. If some of the men had rather a ferocious air their looks belied them, for they were a very quiet lot of people, and quite ready to talk to the tenderfoot, on a basis of absolute equality only, I need hardly say.

Some supper was obtained with difficulty, for in an American hotel, managed on the old-fashioned lines, the dining-room is only open for meals at stated hours, and when it shuts it shuts, and the late-comer must wait hungry till the next advertised meal hour. For this reason

we had one morning at Bakersfield almost missed our early train, as the dining-room should not open till 6.30 A.M., and therefore every difficulty was raised by the kitchen department to serving breakfast at 6.15.

We were put up in an annexe a few yards away. It was simply a passage with a row of little rooms on either side. The only method of heating these was by little wood stoves which seemed not to have been lighted for months, and as a result the cold was of unexampled clamminess and piercingness. However, the stoves were soon lighted and quickly made a small part of the rooms unbearably hot, and as the beds were good the cold was soon forgotten. Early next morning, while it was still dark, I was awakened by the inroad of a queer little man, who looked more like a monkey in a striped jersey, jabbering very broken English, but discovered it was only the Japanese servant to light the stove. When we got up the out-look was dismal. The whole place was shrouded in mist, and so far as seeing the cañon was concerned we might have been in Clapham. There at least we should have had more chance of getting away, as the only train away from the cañon left at 9 A.M. The question then was whether to stay on till the next day's train and risk being snowed up, which



Grand Cañon.



seemed by no means improbable and might involve my missing my boat at New York, or to reconcile ourselves to disappointment and depart at once while we had the chance.

We decided we had better risk it and stay, so we played picquet in our rooms as the sitting-rooms were so cruelly hot, or tramped up and down the veranda. It was like being on the deck of a ship, waiting for the fog to lift so that we could get on.

About one o'clock it stopped snowing and then the mists began to disperse, and we were well rewarded for our journey. The cañon lay before us, "260 miles long, 13 miles broad, 6000 feet deep, and painted like a flower," as the railway guide had told us. These bald facts give at least some idea of its size, nor can I hope to give any description in the least adequate to the grandeur and impressiveness of the sight. The most evident thing about the cañon is that it is not a valley among hills, but a fissure in a great plateau, with smaller fissures running off at right angles like gigantic cracks in sun-baked clay. The sides were not perpendicular as I had expected, but sloped inwards in a series of steps formed by the different strata. Nor did they run in rigid straight lines, but rather in endless capricious curves like the edge of a wave flooding over a sandy beach.

Bright Angel Hotel was at the head of a little side cañon, down which we looked, and from where we were the bottom of the great cañon seemed a broad flat plain; but really this was but a false bottom some 4500 feet below us, and the cañon fell another 1500 feet in a narrow precipitous gorge down which the river rushed, though from where we stood we could see only the narrow black line of the top of this gorge.

There was then an enormous broad cañon with sloping sides, which ran back into countless bays and indentations, and in the flat bottom of this a deep narrow crack. From the lower plain rose in places fantastic conical hills, in which the horizontal strata appeared again as rings. These apparently had been left when the broad cañon was carved out. The view as the mist rolled away was very grand, headland after headland appearing through the clouds till almost the entire view was bare.

They had assured us that though it was snowing with us it would not be snowing at the bottom of the cañon, and in fact they had sent many of their horses down to the lower plateau to escape the snow. We had of course accepted the natives' statements even if wondering, but when the mist rose we found they were confirmed, for the snow ceased at

a clearly defined line half-way down to the plateau. The colour of the rocks did not come out well and they were nearly all one warm red, but this was to some extent compensated for by the snow, which lay in narrow white lines along all the steps in the cañon's sides and in rings round the little hills, thus greatly accentuating this very characteristic horizontal effect. The extreme clearness of the atmosphere made all the distances seem much less than they really were, and so made the first sight rather disappointing.

The pine trees, which grew all about the hotel on the upper plateau, did not go more than a few hundred feet down the slope. It is quite possible to go on horseback down a trail to the lower level, and that is the usual excursion, but owing to the snow it was impossible for us, so we had to content ourselves with a drive to another point of view. We went off in a light waggon with four horses. The horses had been for some days idly kicking their heels in the paddock, and so were in great spirits. We drove through a foot of snow down a twisting narrow path among the trees at a most exhilarating pace. The driver worked the brake with his foot, but the unusual thing was that it was not an ordinary foot-brake, but a tall lever like a hand-brake, though rather farther forward,

so that he had to be rather gymnastic to get his foot up to it, but once in place he had a tremendous purchase. He told me he used to drive the coach up to the Grand Cañon before the railway was through, sometimes with two horses, sometimes four, sometimes six, according to the load. We drove two or three miles to Storey's Point, whence we could see more of the Grand Cañon itself, and also see right down to the muddy, rushing river. The whole view was indescribably magnificent.

That night it snowed again, and when we left the next morning, the whole country was covered with fresh snow which shone dazzlingly under a bright sun. We caught the through train at the junction. It was then Thursday morning, and we were to reach New York on Sunday night. On Friday morning we crossed the Rockies, here no more magnificent than the Cheviots as the snow had vanished; but when we had descended to the plain, across which the line ran mile after mile straight as an arrow, we could see a line of fine snow peaks stretching away on either side of the pass we had come over. Possibly much of this grandeur was accidental and due to freshly fallen snow. Certainly we soon found snow again, and the farther east we got the more snow we saw. The country for hundreds of miles was a dreary

white desert with mists for its narrow horizon. Between Chicago and New York the snowstorm almost reached the ferocity of a blizzard, and it seemed quite likely that we should be stalled. However, we got through just in time, for most of the lines were blocked for several days after.

It had been indeed a flying visit, inasmuch as I had been seventeen nights away from New York and nine of them in the train, and naturally it was so short not from choice but from necessity. But I think it was quite worth the labour because of the interest of the oil-fields, a part of California little known, and because of the beauty of the Grand Cañon. The latter is now so accessible that people are beginning to visit it more and more. With the march of civilisation the picturesque Bright Angel Hotel is to give way to a large modern one, so that it is an added pleasure to have seen the cañon before all the local colour was wiped away, and possibly the wonderful landscape, which depends for part of its charm at least on its remoteness, vulgarised.

THE END



Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
Edinburgh & London

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